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— Warren Ellis
Artbomb.net

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KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

LONE WOLF AND CUB

DARK HORSE COMICS

STUDIO PROTEUS

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DARK HORSE COMICS

VOLUME 23

TEARS OF ICE

By KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA

translation
DANA LEWIS

lettering & retouch
DIGITAL CHAMELEON

cover illustration
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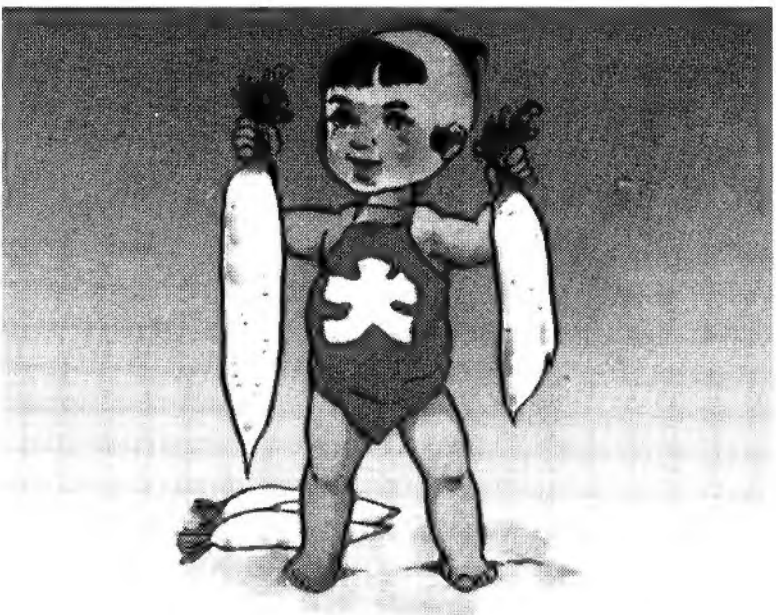
TEARS OF ICE

子連れ狼

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA



VOLUME

23

A NOTE TO READERS

Lone Wolf and Cub is famous for its carefully researched re-creation of Edo-Period Japan. To preserve the flavor of the work, we have chosen to retain many Edo-Period terms that have no direct equivalents in English. Japanese is written in a mix of Chinese ideograms and a syllabic writing system, resulting in numerous synonyms. In the glossary, you may encounter words with multiple meanings. These are words written with Chinese ideograms that are pronounced the same but carry different meanings. A Japanese reader seeing the different ideograms would know instantly which meaning it is, but these synonyms can cause confusion when Japanese is spelled out in our alphabet. *O-yurushi o* (please forgive us)!

LONE WOLF AND CUB

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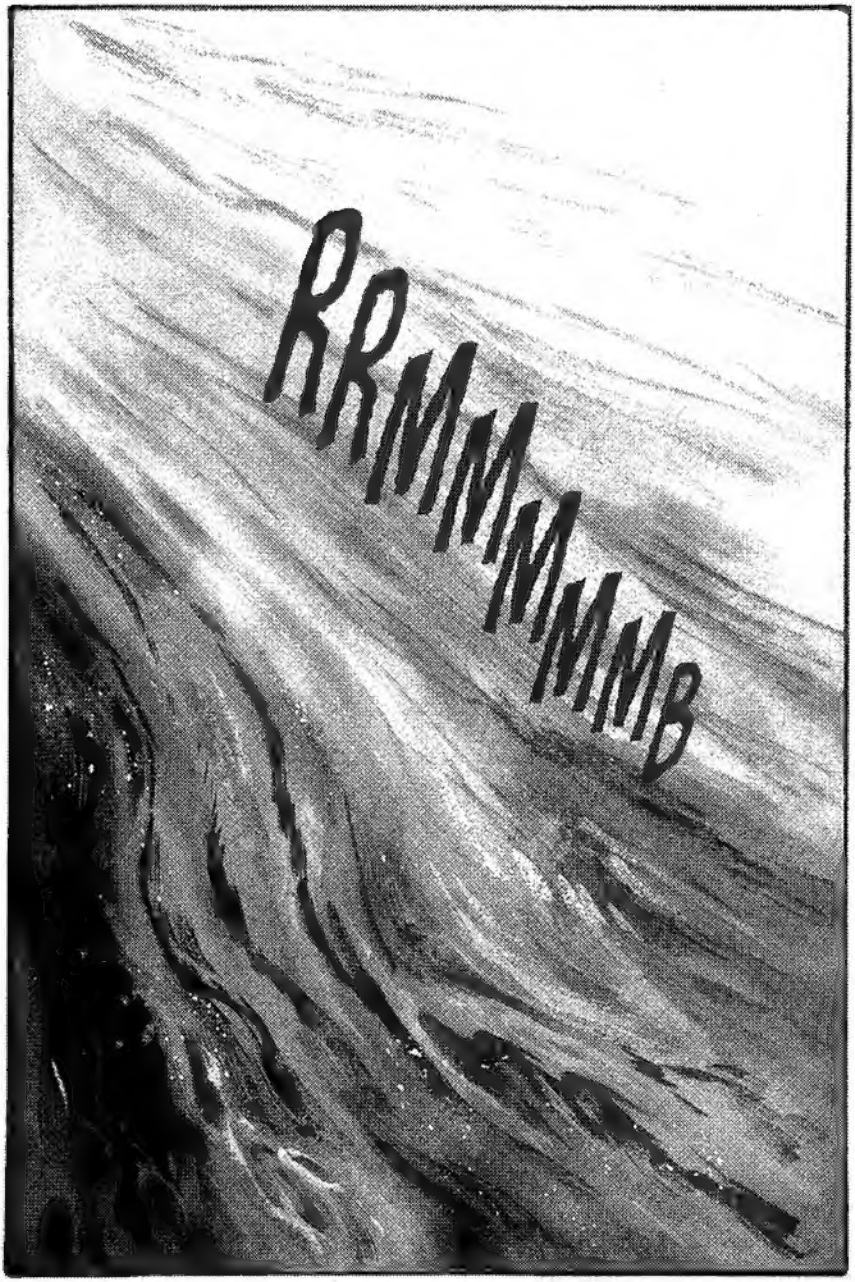
the hundred and twelfth

Frozen Edo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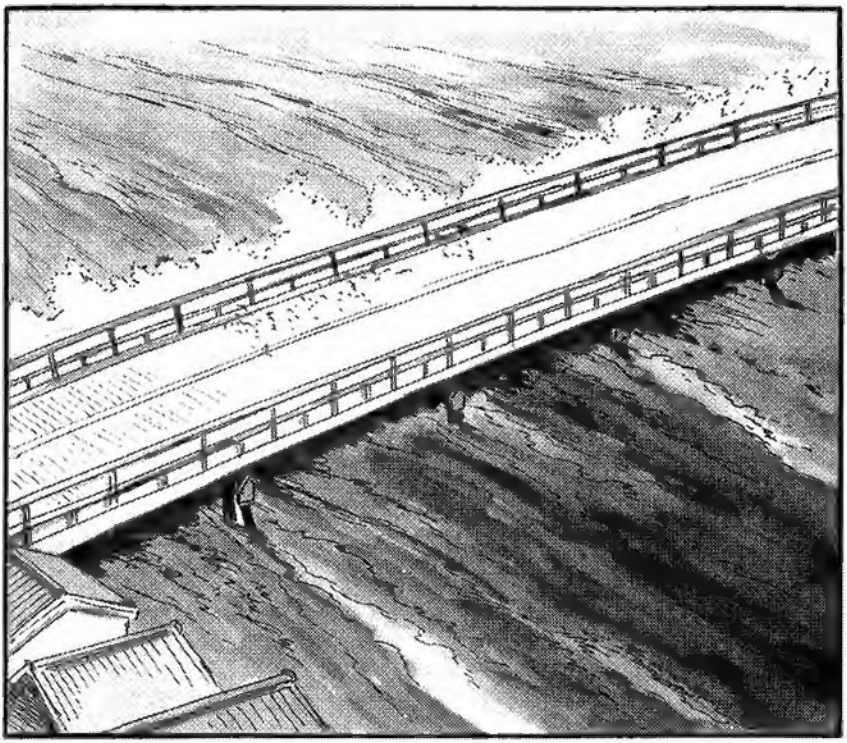
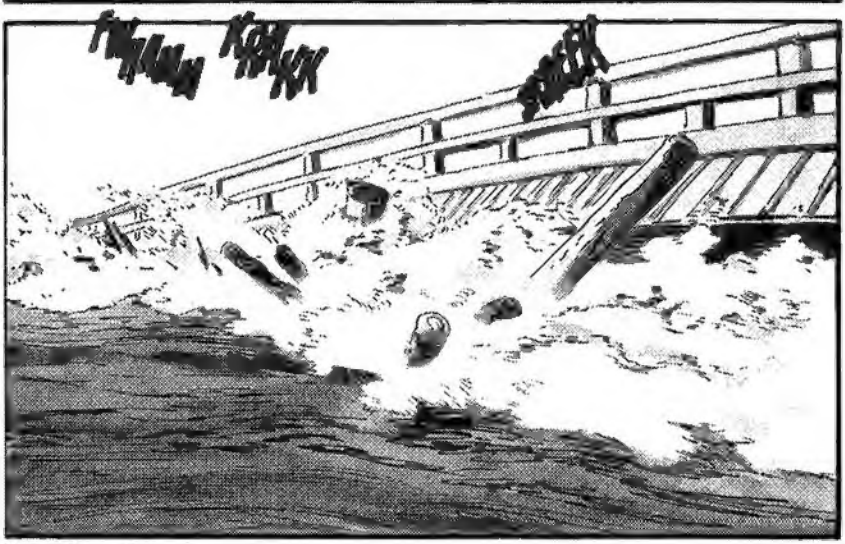
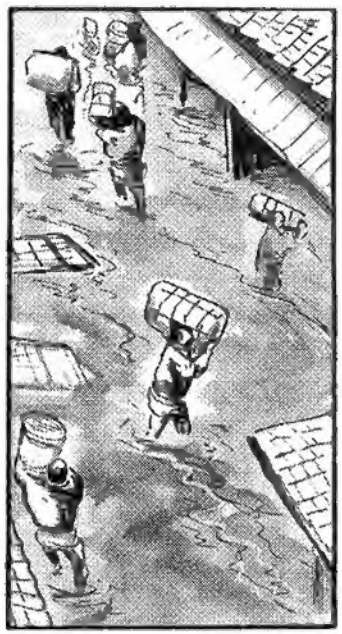
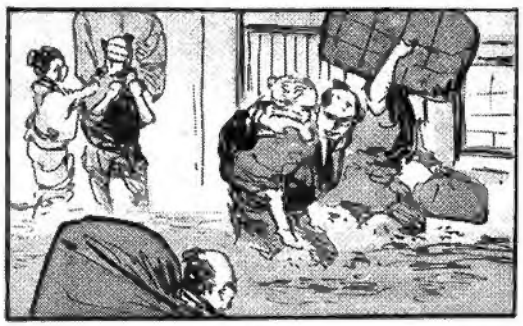
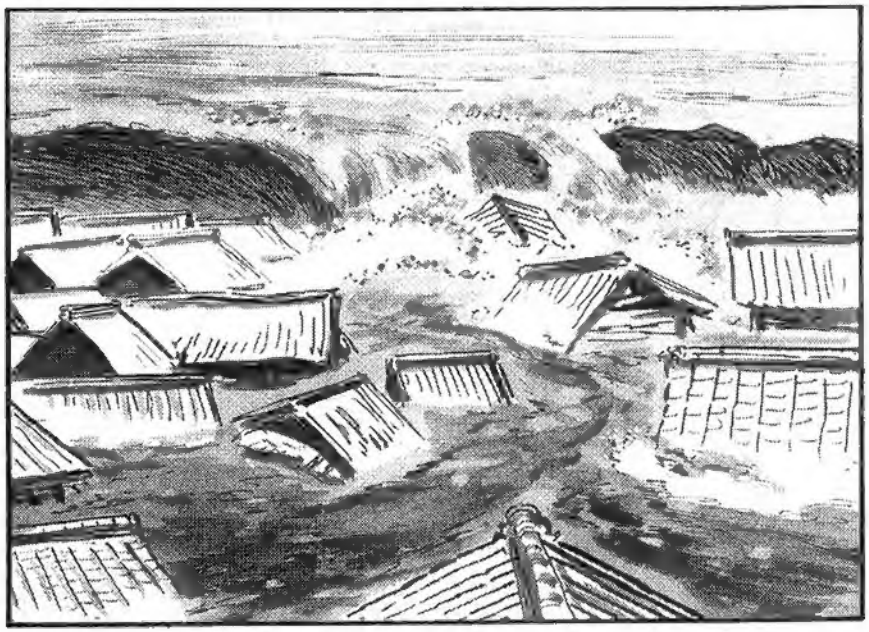


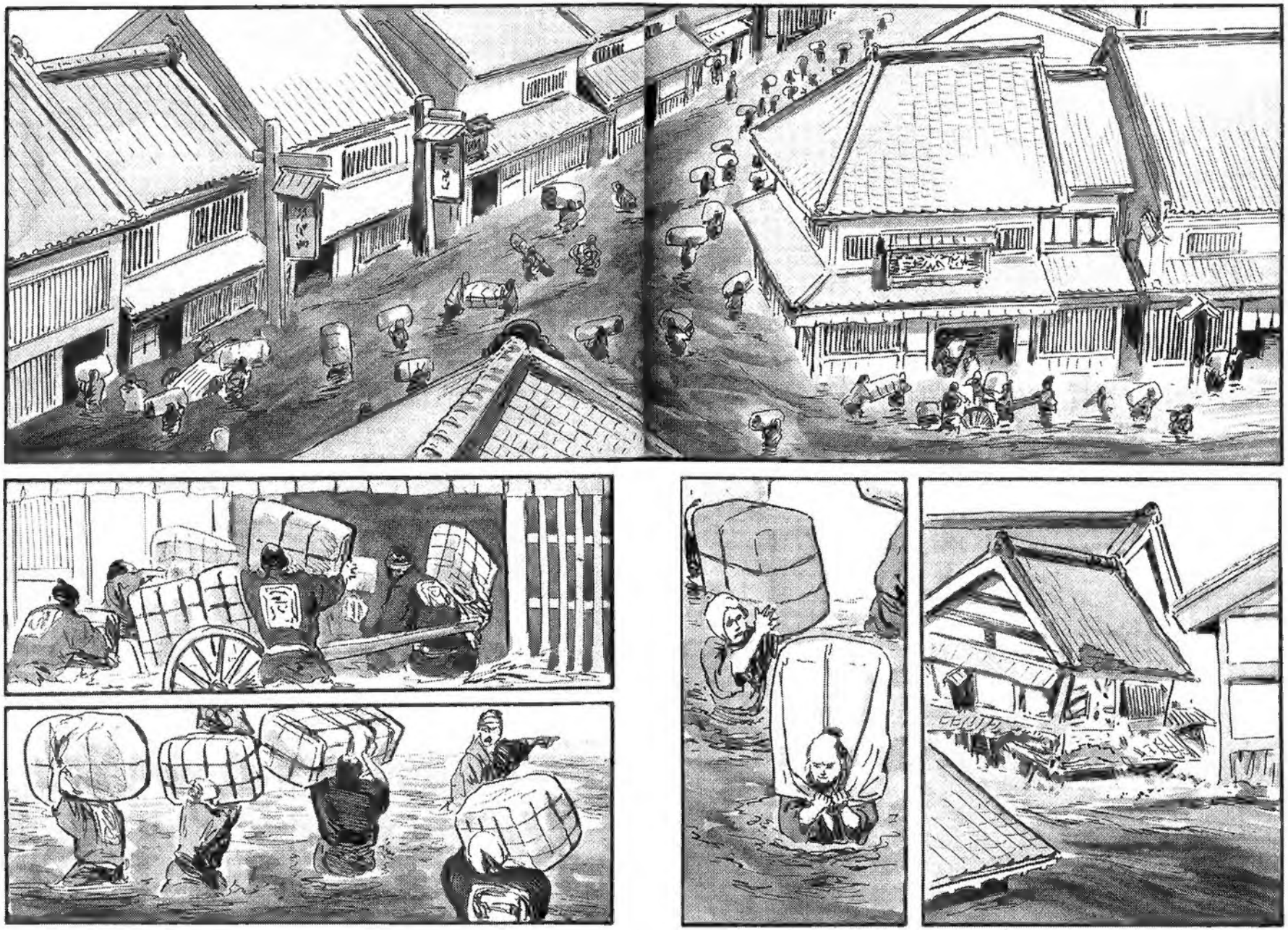


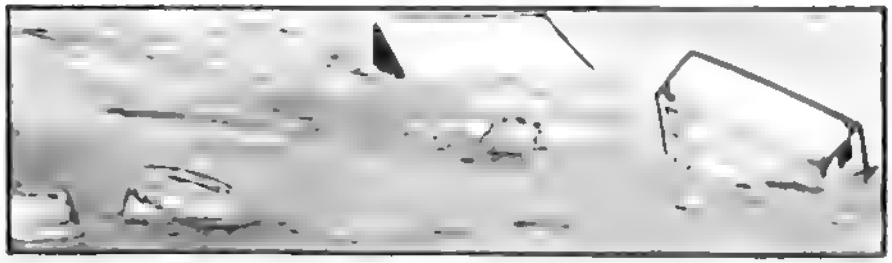
SKRASSSH
KRNCH
SPRAKK
SPRAK

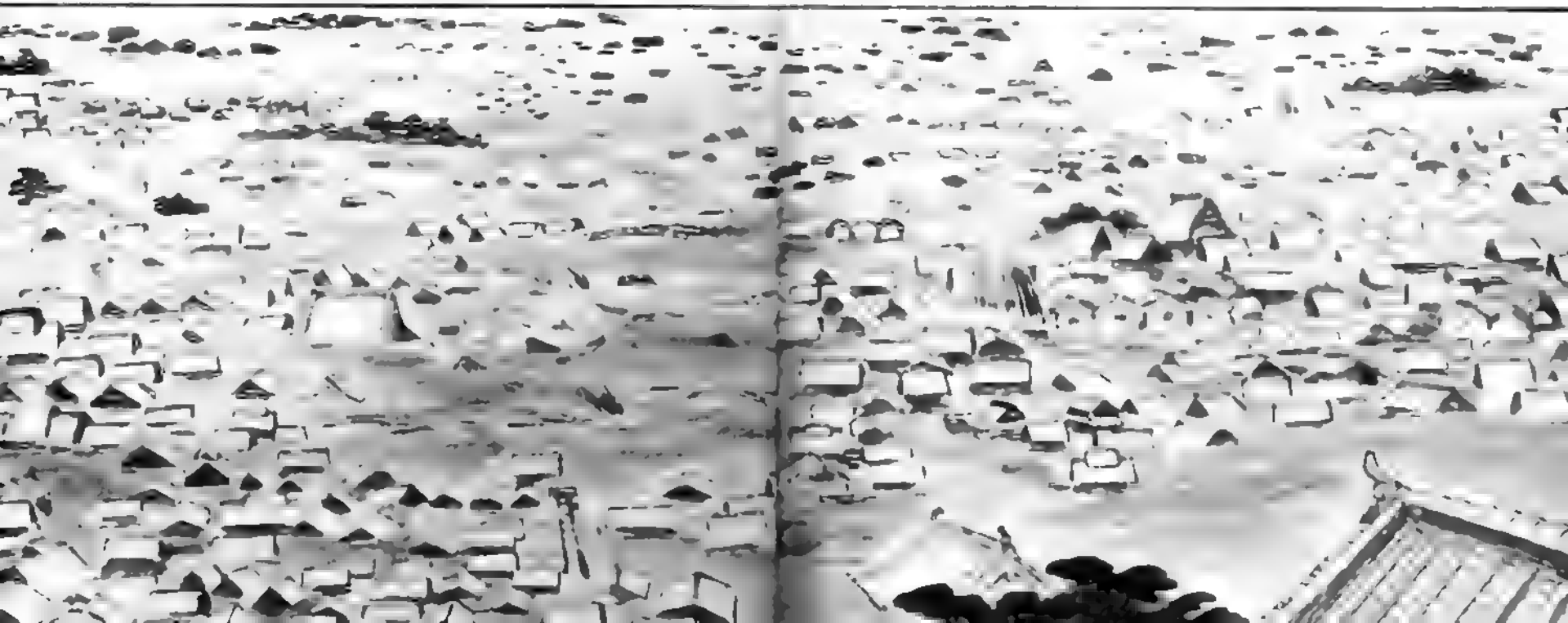


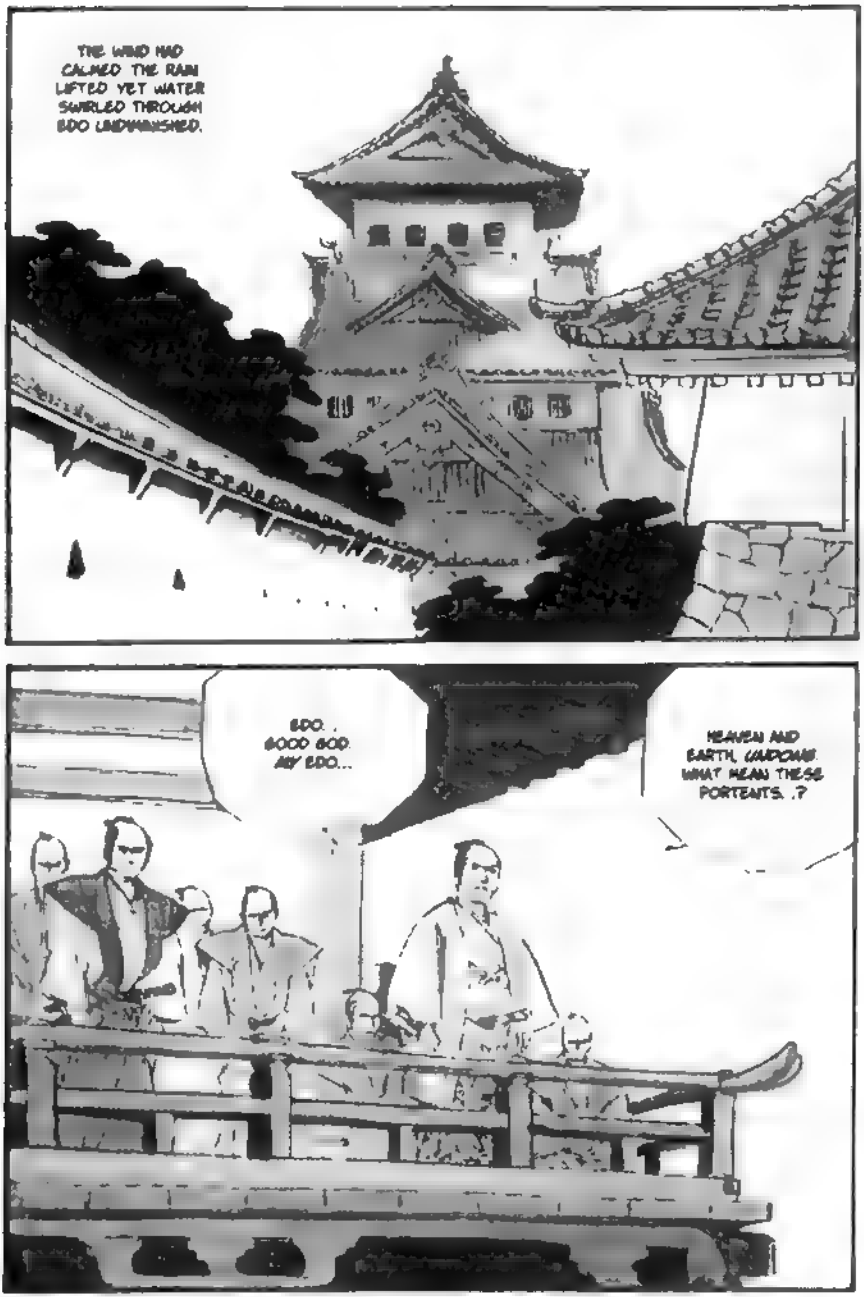






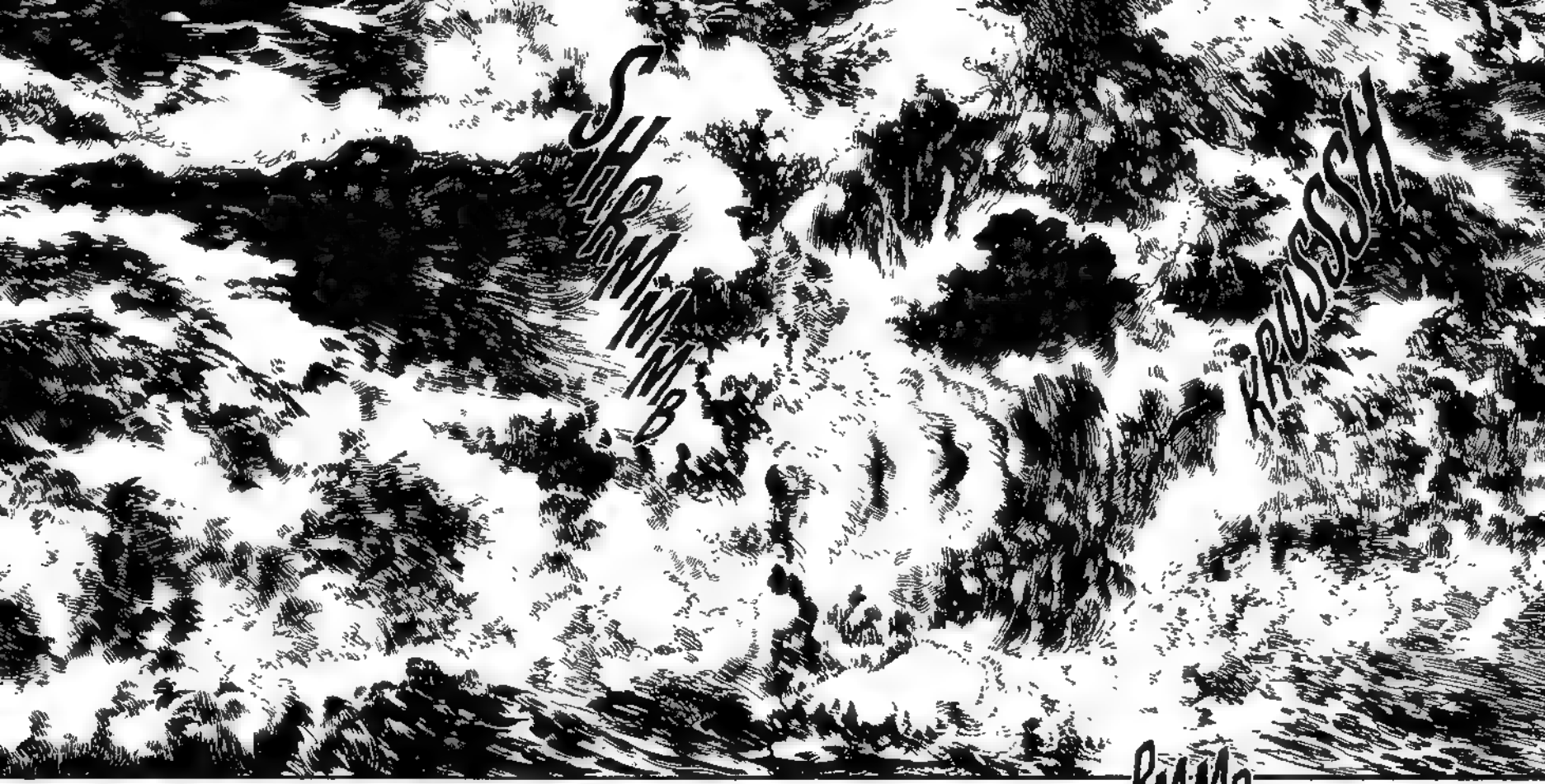





THE WIND HAD CALMED THE RAIN LIFTED YET WATER SWIRLED THROUGH EDO UNDIMINISHED.
EDO... GOOD GOD. MY EDO...
HEAVEN AND EARTH, LORDING WHAT MEAN THESE PORTENTS..?

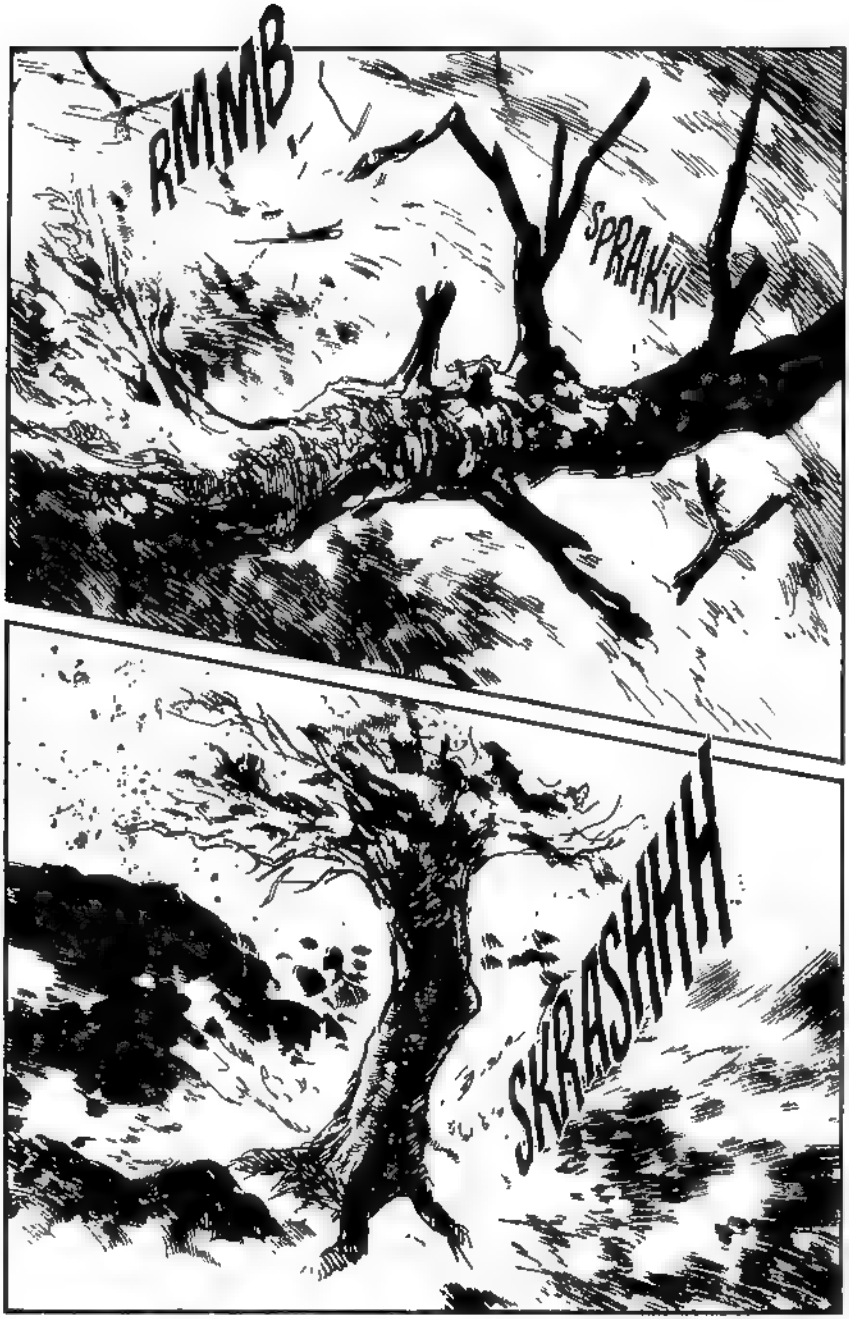
BKROOM
RMBBMM
WHOOM
THERE! OVER THERE!
AHH..?!
SUMIYOSHI HILL! IT'S—

RMMBB
WHBLOOSH


SHRMMB
KRUSSH

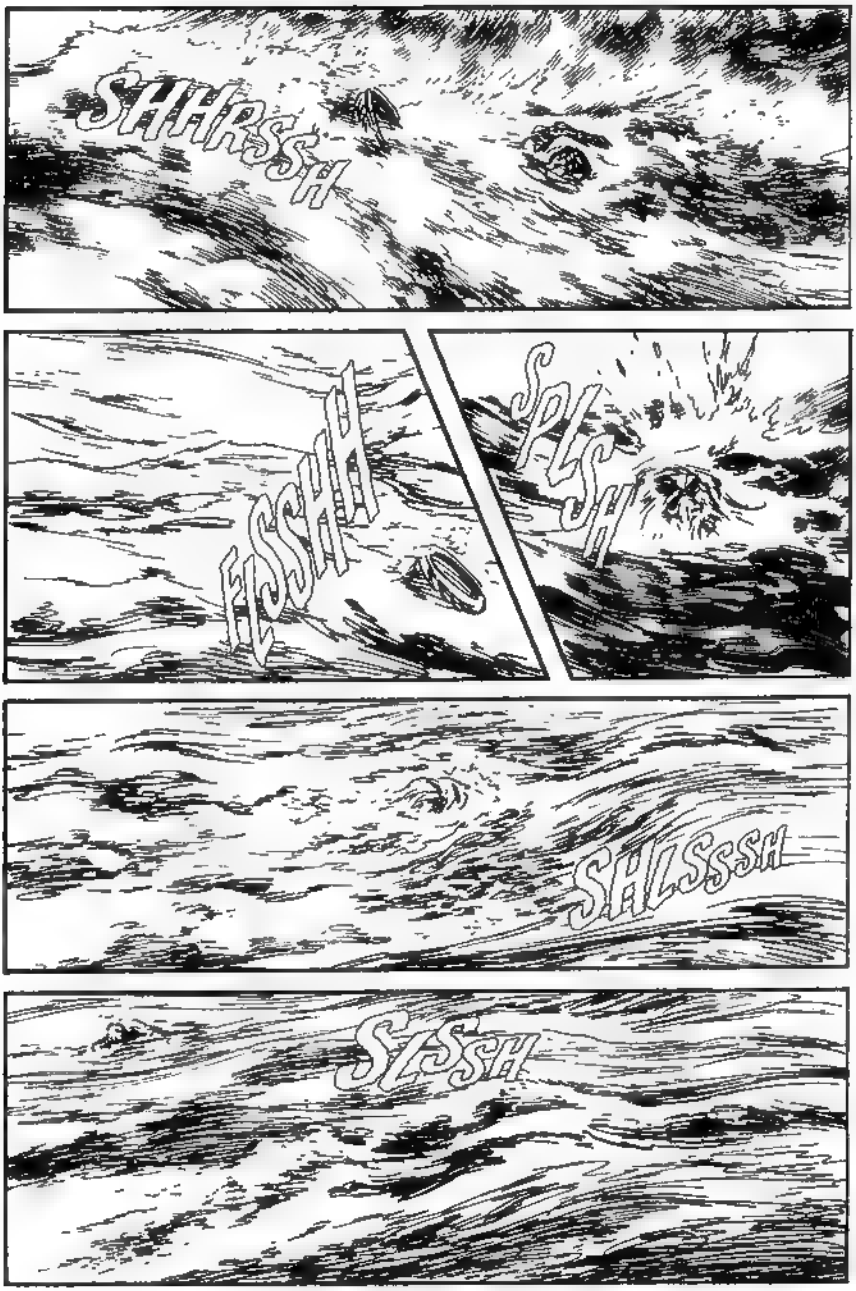
SLRRRSH

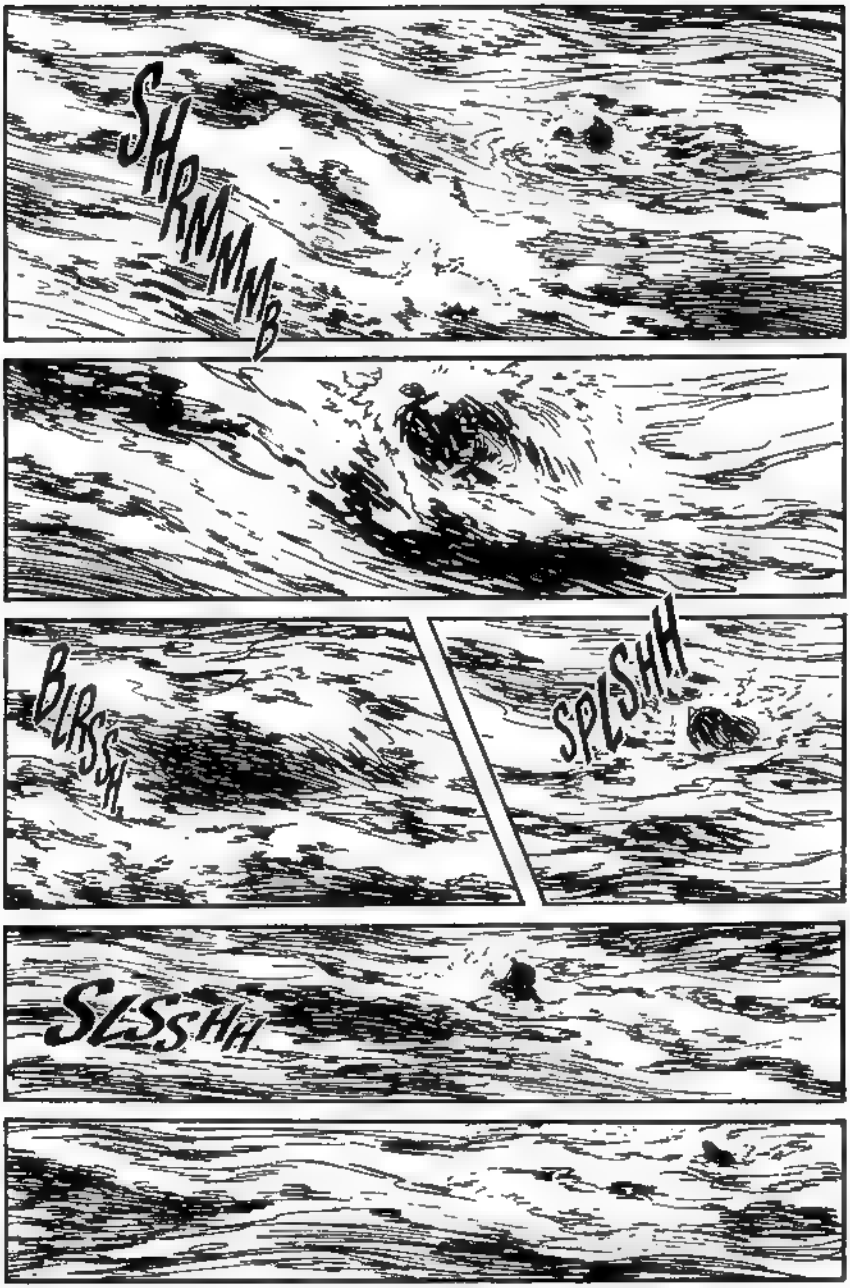
RMMB
RMMB
RMMB

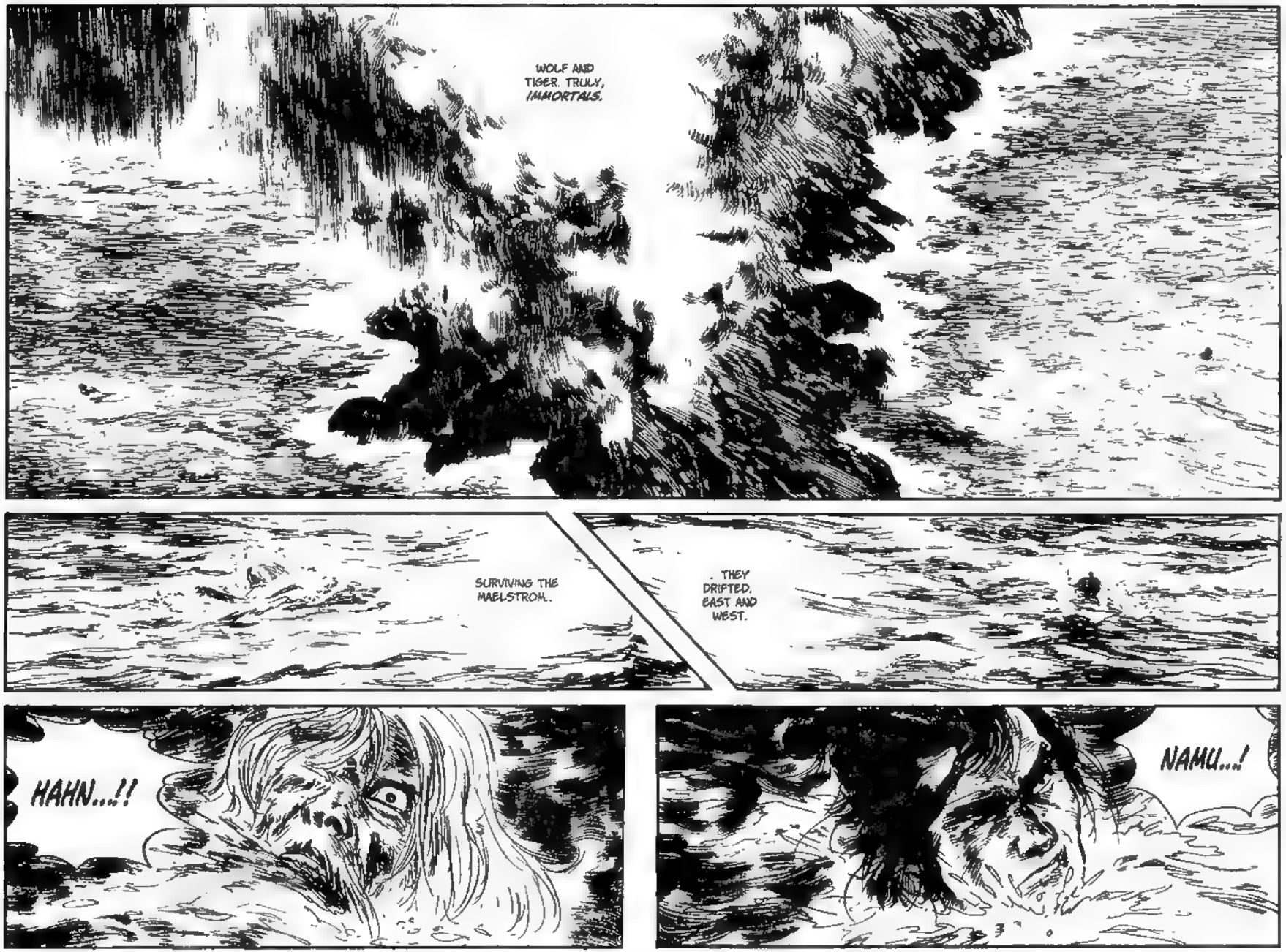

RMMB
SPRAK-K
SKRASHHH

SHRMMMB
SHKRRSH

SKLUSH
ZHMMMB

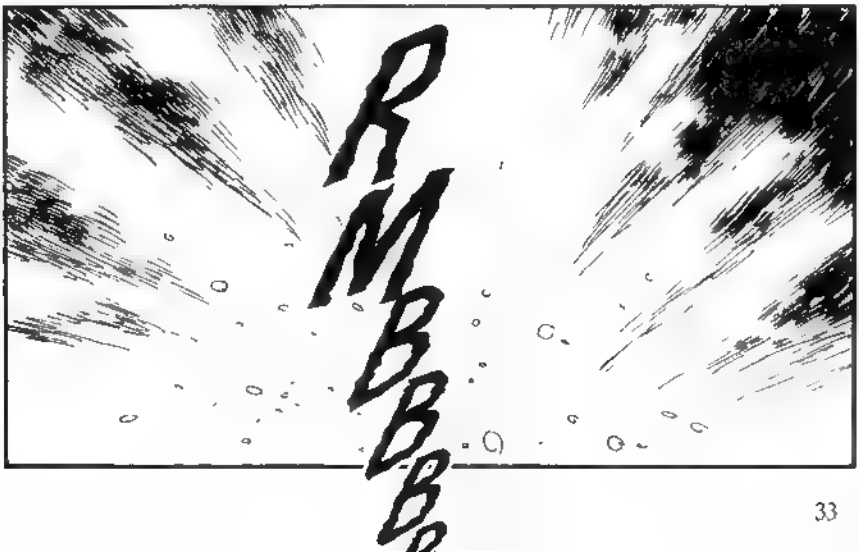

SHHRSSH
ESSHH
SPLSH
SHLSSSH
SZSSH

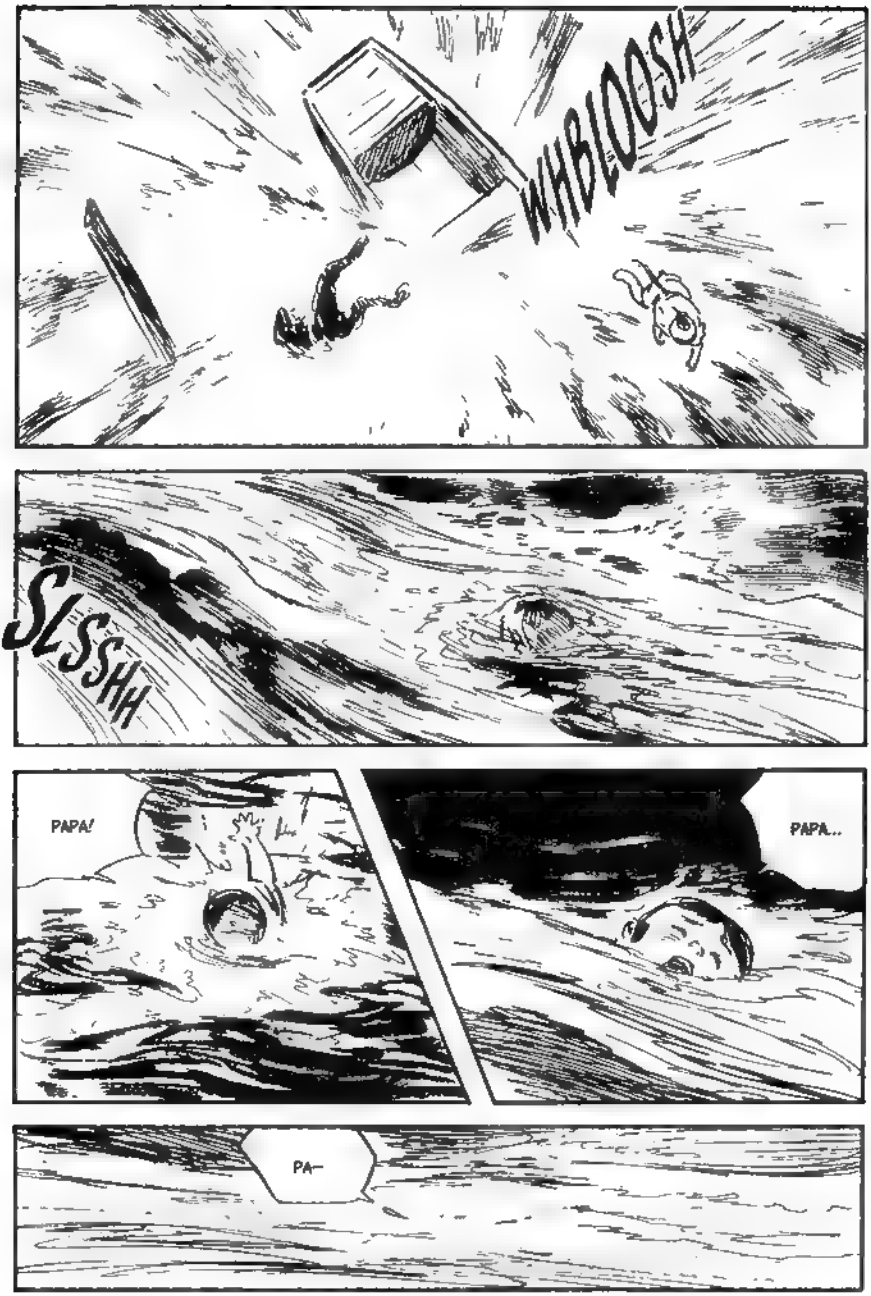

SHRMMMMB
BLRSSH
SPLSHH
SLSSHH

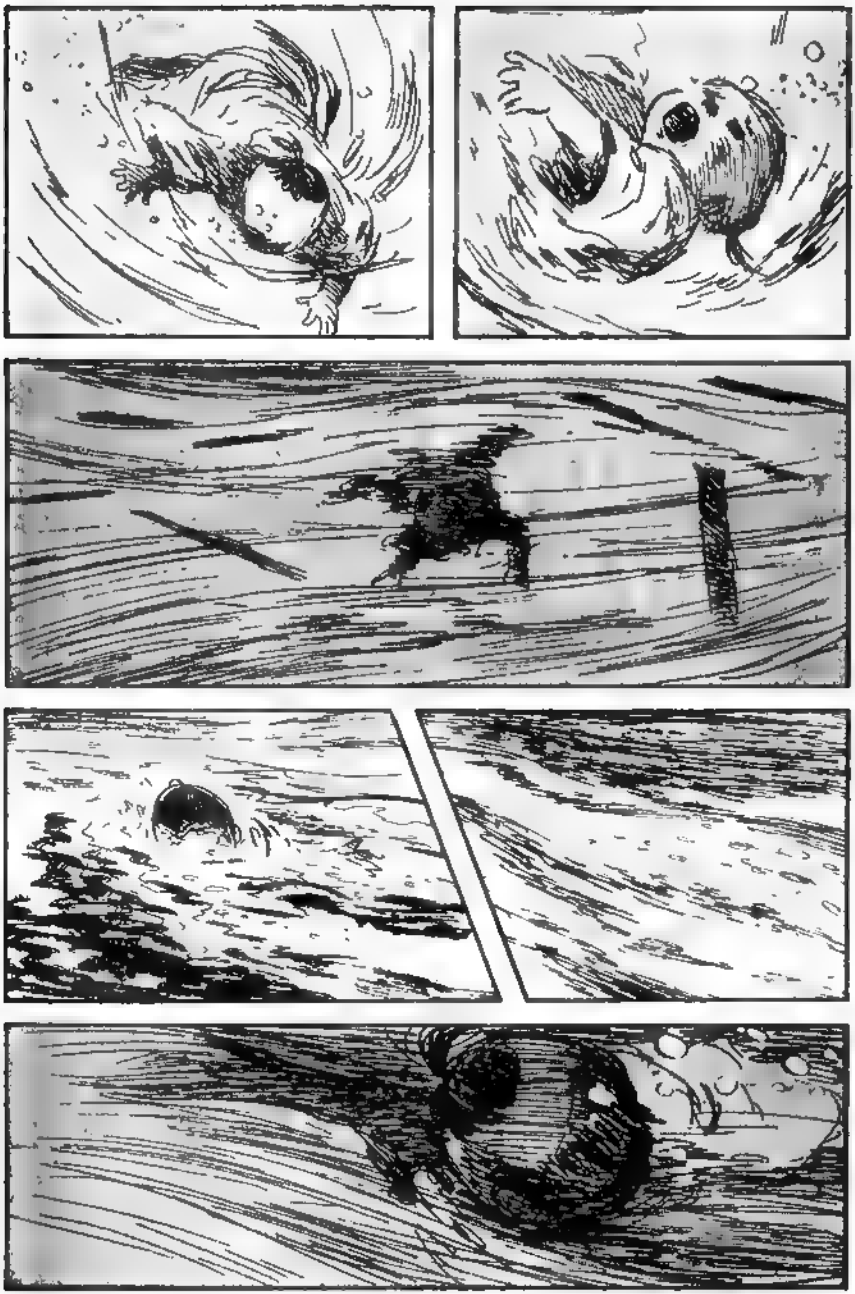

WOLF AND TIGER. TRULY, IMMORTALS.
SURVIVING THE MAELSTROM..
. THEY DRIFTED. EAST AND WEST.
HAHN...!!
NAMU...!

SHMMMMB
WHKOOM
RMBBB
WRHAM
AHH?!
NOOO!!

SHKOOMM

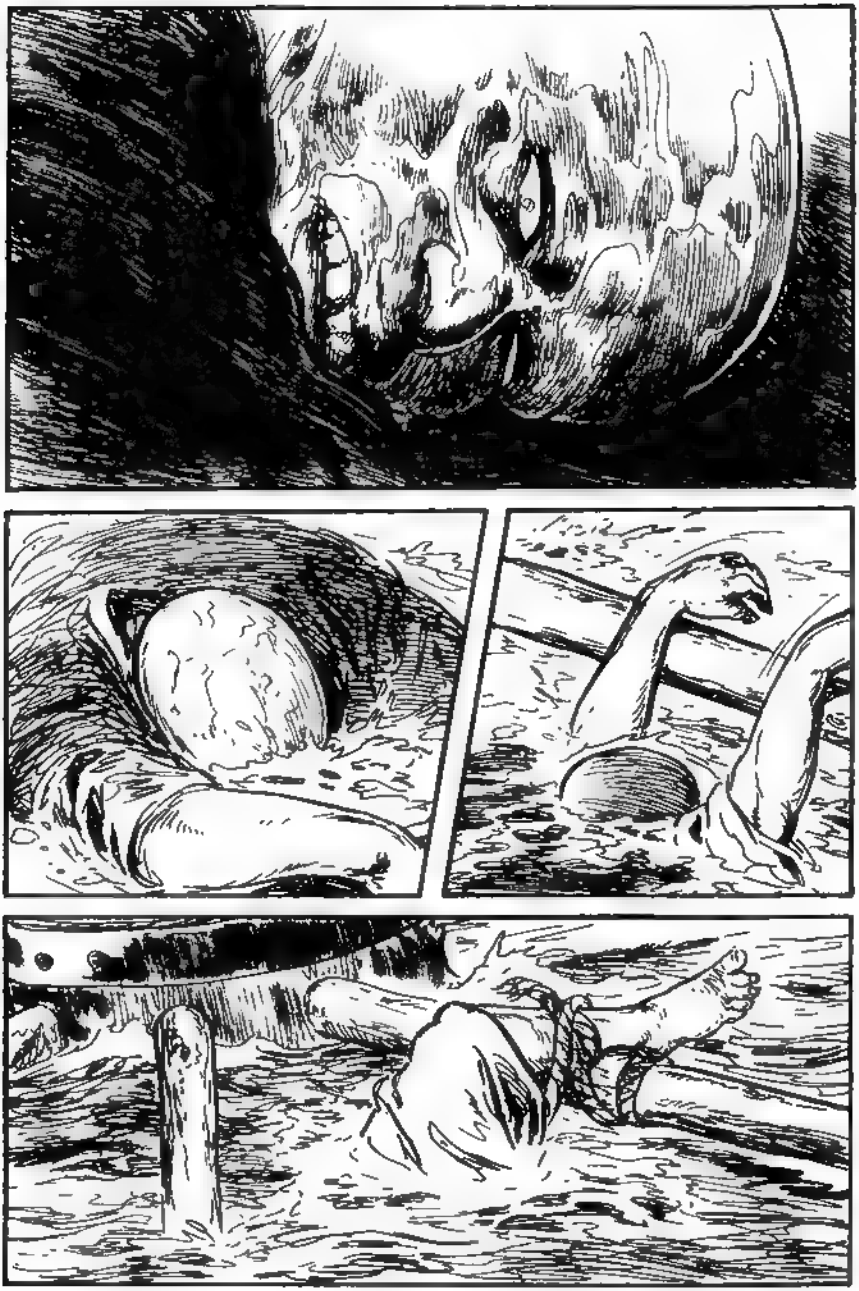

RMBBBB


WHBLOOSH
SLSSHH
PAPA!
PAPA...
PA—



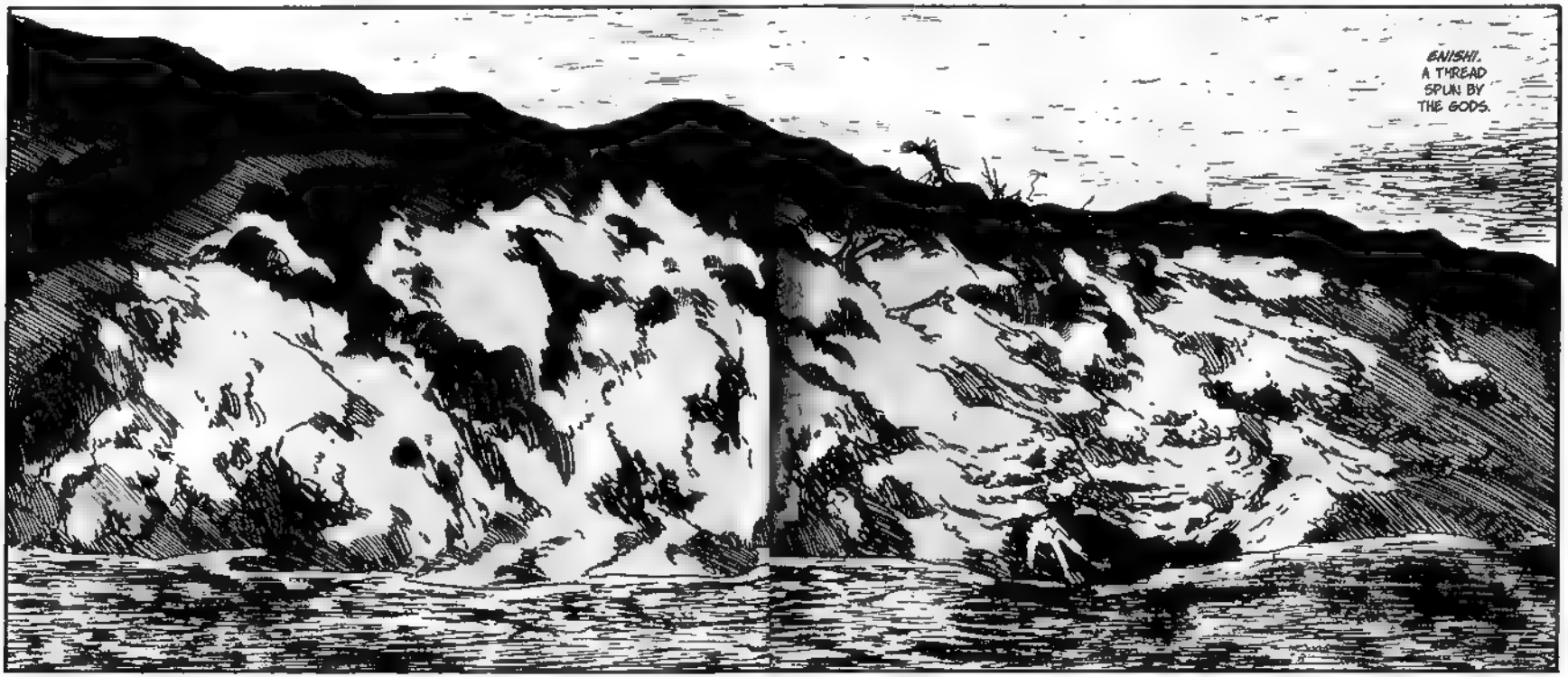
HAHH!
ŌGAMI ITTŌ'S *LIFE*... IN MY *ARMS*.
SO STRANGE...
SUCH FATEFUL *ENVY*!...

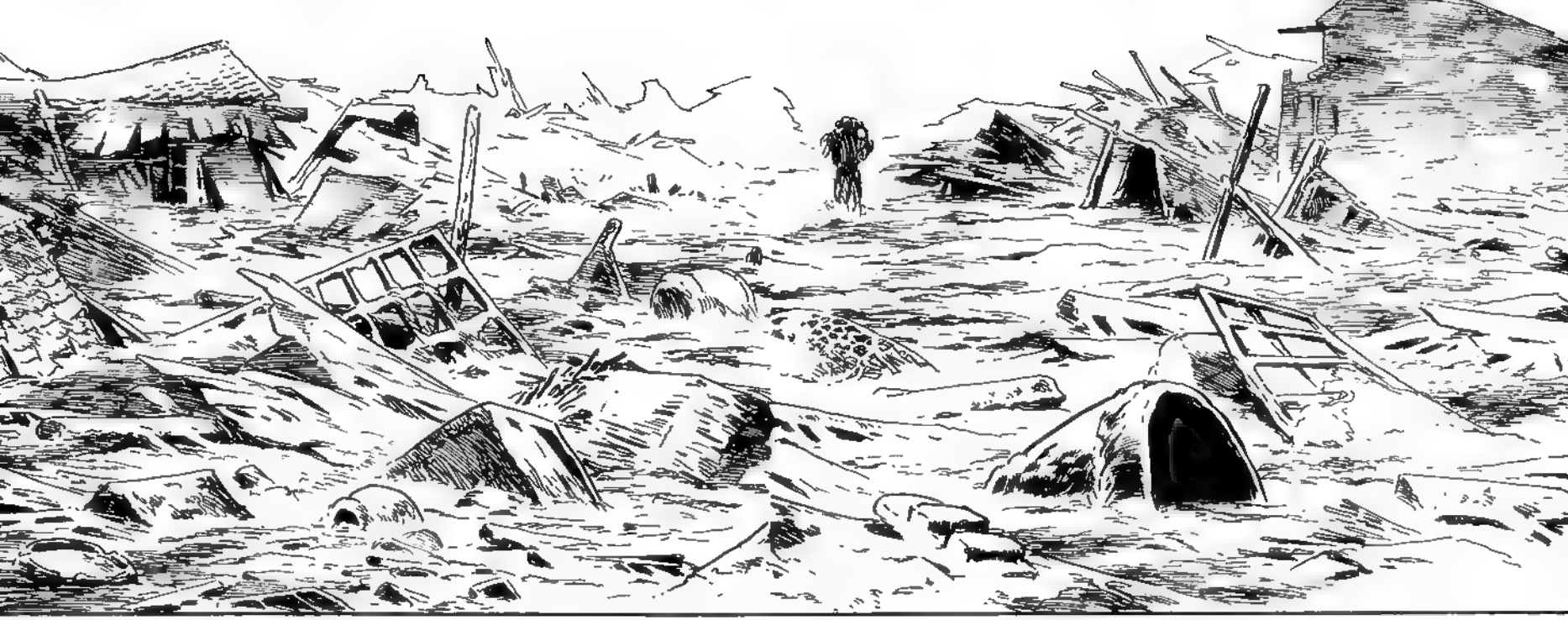
SKRASH
WHRAM



HE WAS ABE-DOMO'S SON...I CAN'T ABANDON HIS BODY.

SADAME.
DESTINY THE ROLL OF BUDDHA'S DICE.

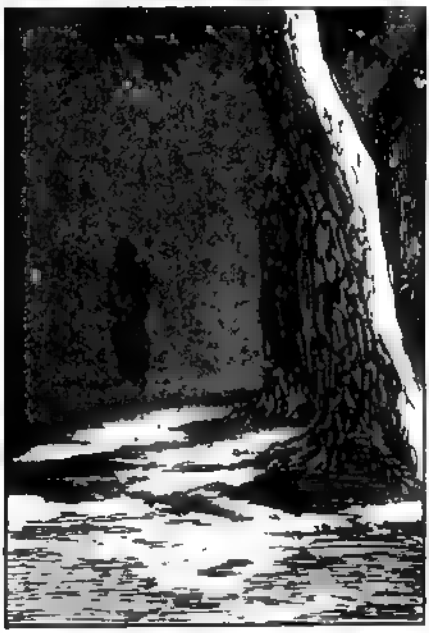

ENISHI.
A THREAD SPUN BY THE GODS.



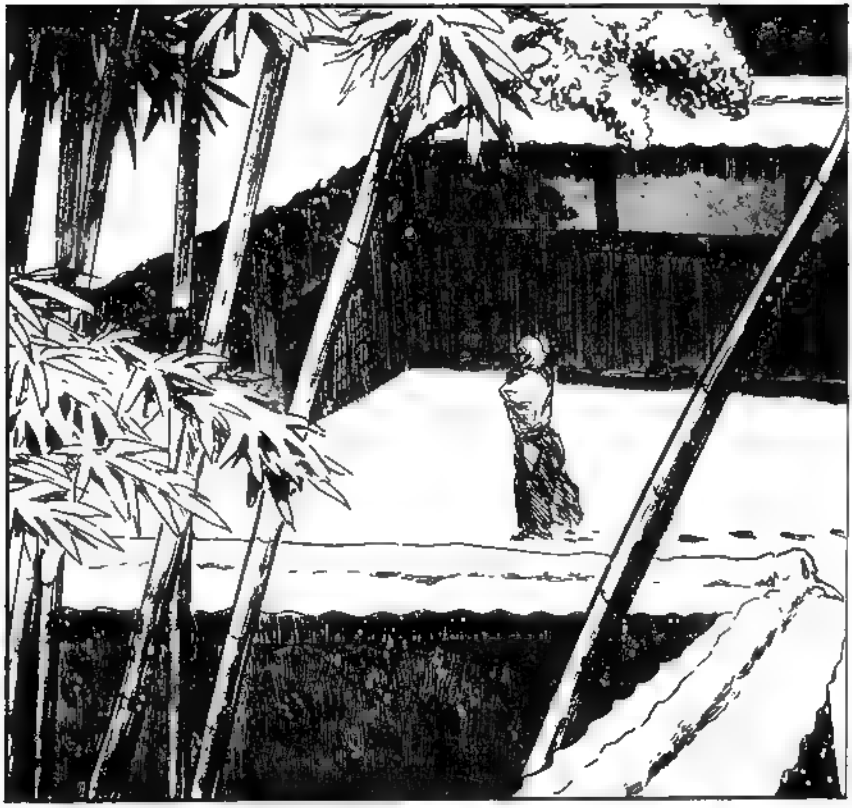
MONK.
CHANT HIS SUTRAS.

THANK YOU.
WHO SEEKS THESE PRAYERS?
ŌGAMI ITTŌ.
HIS NAME WAS ABE.

THE WATERS RECEDE. BUT...
SNOW...?
LIVE, DAIGORO! YOUR FATHER LIVES, AND RETURNS.

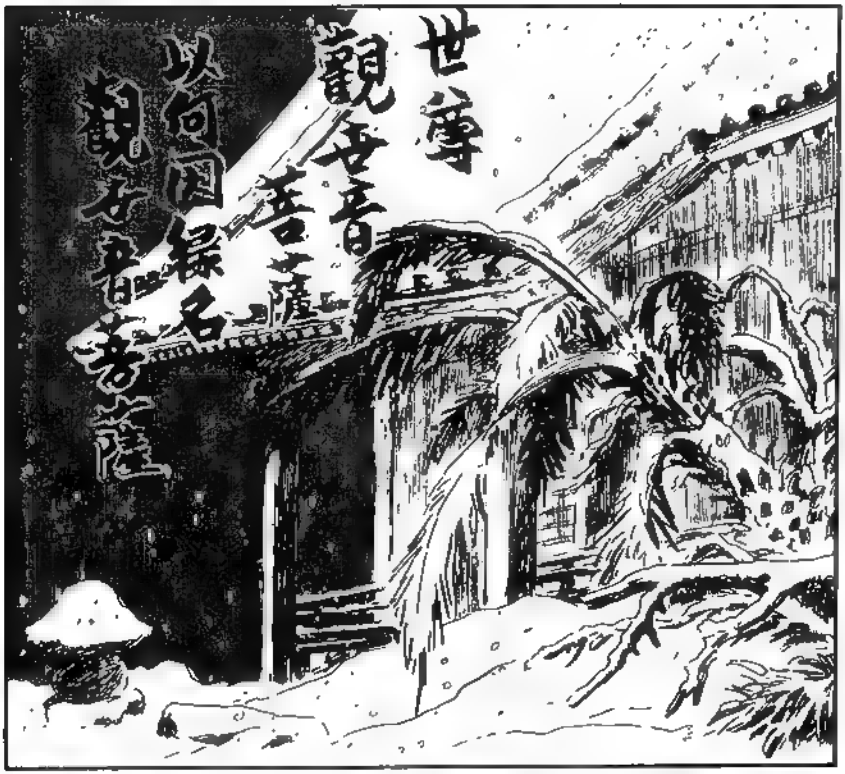


WHY SHOULD I...?
YAGYŪ RETSUDŌ .?
EDO WILL FREEZE TONIGHT...
AND NOW, SNOW.



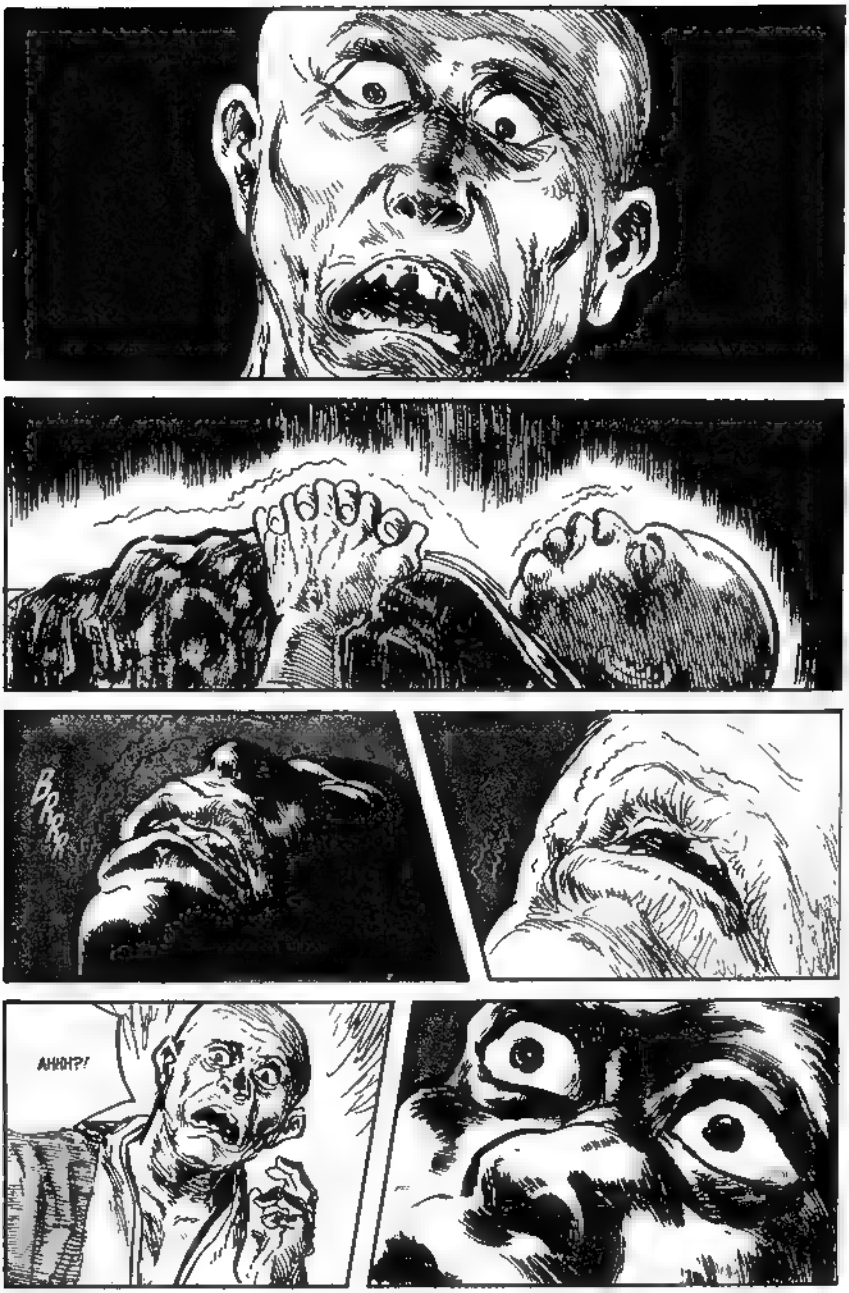
I RETURN!

GO-GOZEN-SAMA!
GOZEN-SAMA!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. CALL ROKUSAI THE PHYSICIAN! HEAL THE BOY!


世尊
觀音菩薩
以何因緣名
觀音菩薩

即從座起
偏袒右肩
合掌向佛
而作是言

佛告無盡
意菩薩
善男
善子
若有
無量
百千萬
億衆生
受諸
苦腦
聞是觀世音
菩薩
若心
稱名觀
若有
所是
名者
說!


BRRR
AHH?!

BRRR... C-COLD...
SO... COLD...
AIIEEE!!
DAMN... I I'M FREEZING!
BRRRR!
?? WHERE... AM I?!

OOH...SO COLD.
GUESS I'M NOT IN.. HELL?
THEN.. THEN..?
I'M SAVED!!
GOT... GOTTA GET WARM!
HEY, MONK! HOT WATER! NOW!
AA.. AA...
SNK
SNK

HEH
HEH HEH
HEH...
GLP
GLP
BWAH
HAH HAH
HAW!
SPITTE
SO
YOU DID MY
SUTRASPY
HAW
HAW
HAW!

ABE DON'T DIE THAT EASY, OLD MAN!
WHEN IT HAPPENED..

WHEN THE FLOOD ENGULFED ME...

...I USED MY LAST STRENGTH TO GET MY POSION!

A MAN IN A COMA DOESN'T SWALLOW! HE DOESN'T DROWN! A POISON OF LIFE!
WHEN IT WEARS OFF—BORN AGAIN!
BWAH HAW HAW HAW!!
SO... TELL ME.
WHO BROUGHT ME HERE?

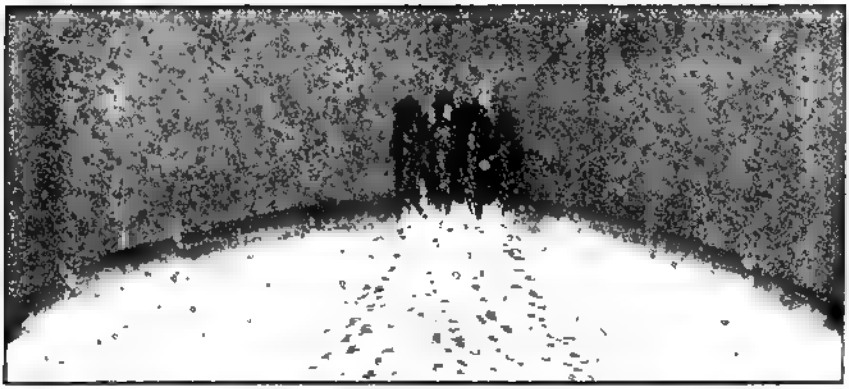
A SAINT, SIR. OSAMI ITTŌ.
GHEKK!
OH MY G-GOD...
AAAGH!

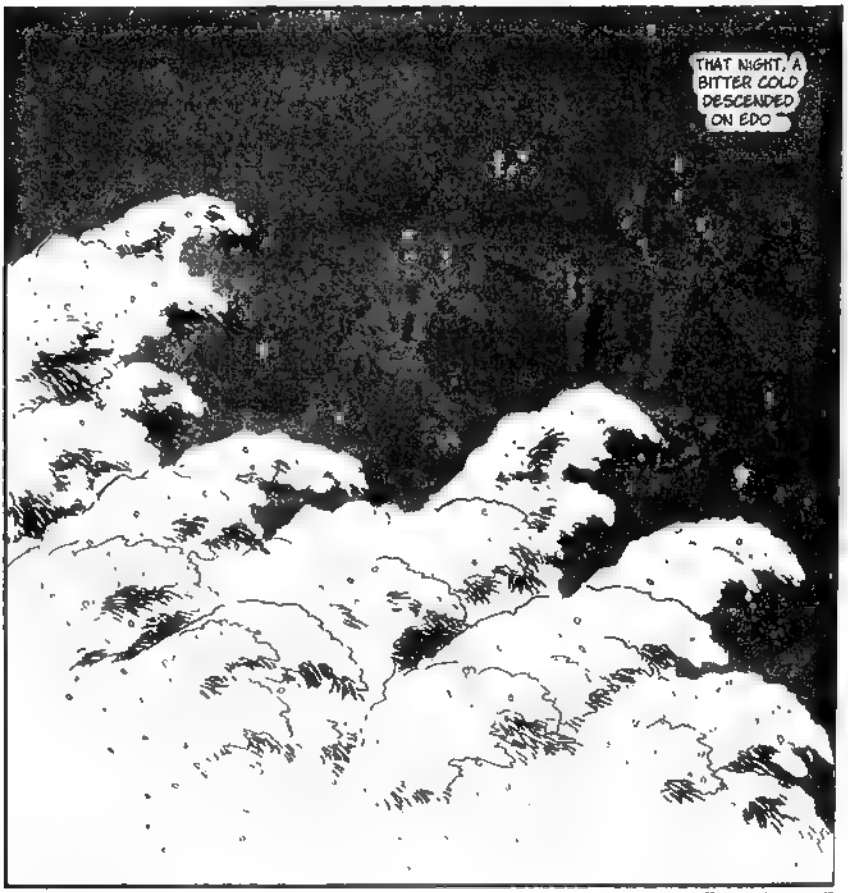
HIS BODY IS WARM AGAIN, AND THE MEDICINE SHOULD TAME HIS FEVER.
HE'S A STRONG CHILD.
A WOLF CHILD.

ALL.
DEAD I ALONE
SURVIVED.
AND
ŌGAMI ITTŌ,
NO DOUBT.
ROKUSAI.
TAKE THE WOMEN
TO OUR YAGYŪ
VILLAGE.
Y-YES,
SIR...

SUTRAS FOR OUR DEAD SEVEN DAYS AND NIGHTS.
FAREWELL.

AND YOU, MY LORD..?
AGAIN!




THAT NIGHT, A BITTER COLD DESCENDED ON EDO

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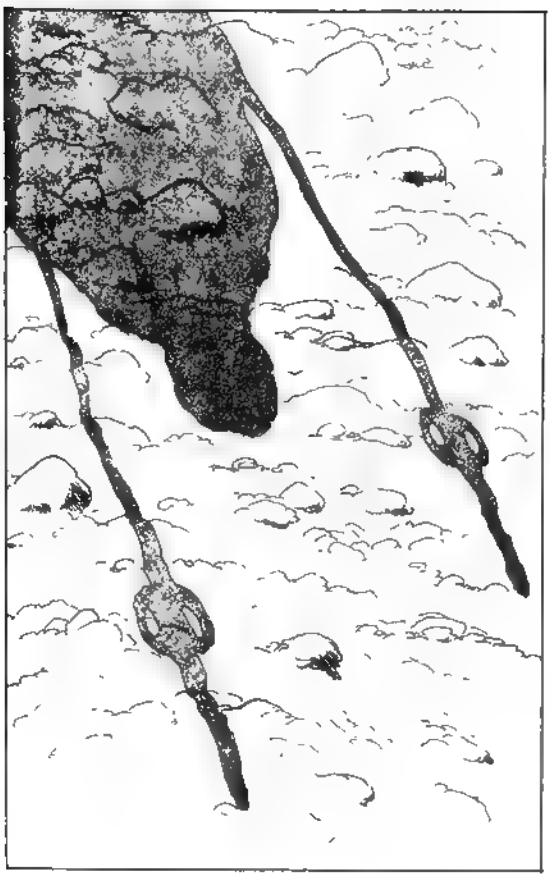
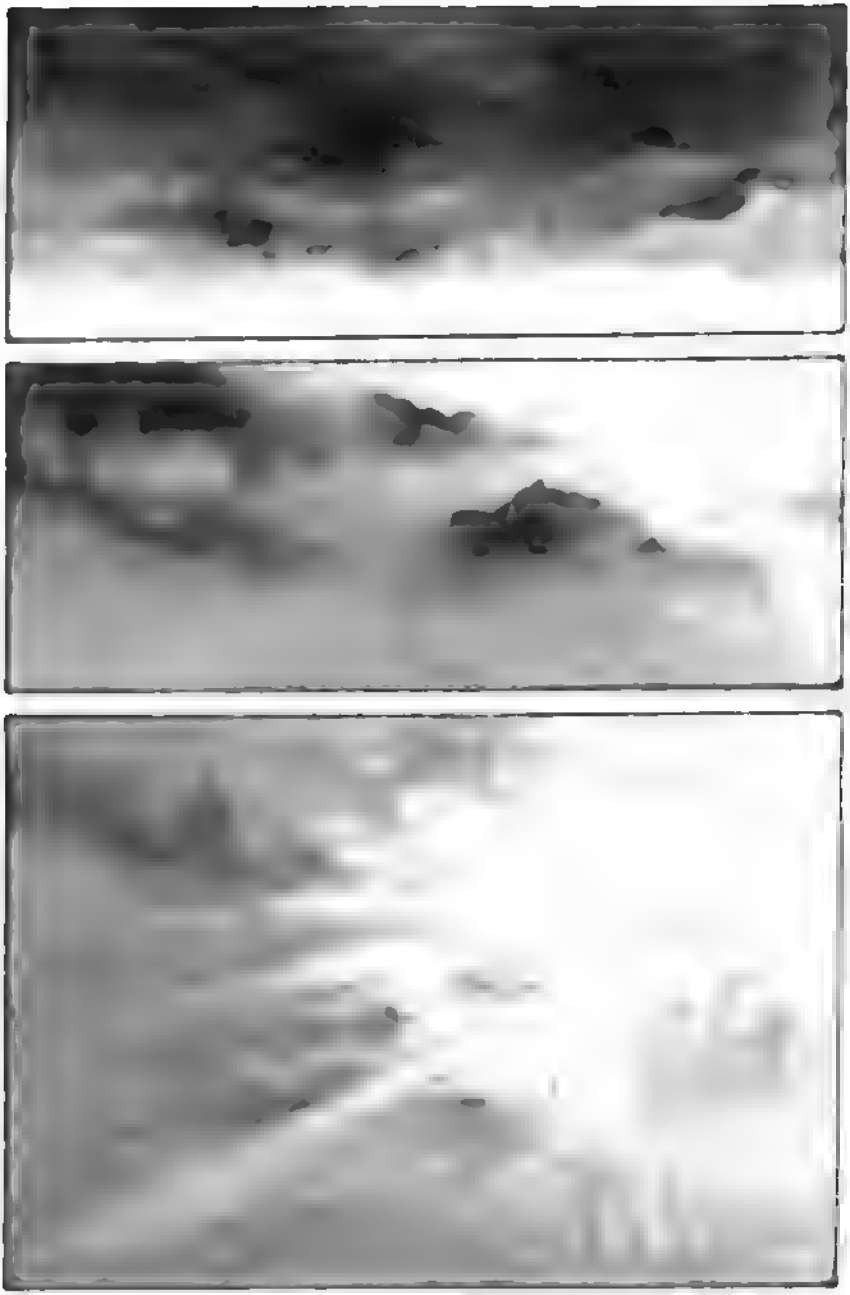
BECAUSE THE BOOK IS ALWAYS BETTER.

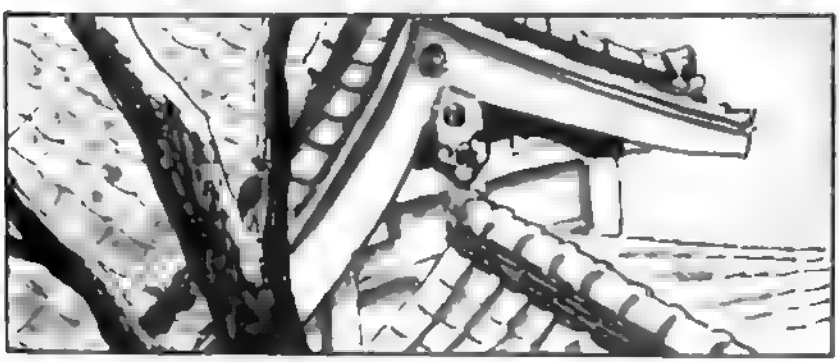
TFT
The Furry Triangles
We Love Beavers.

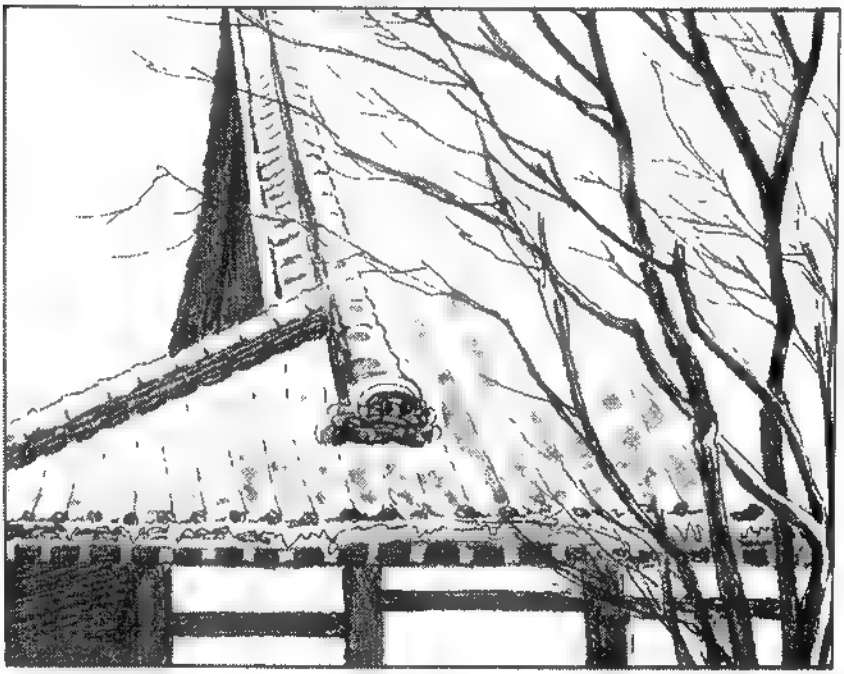


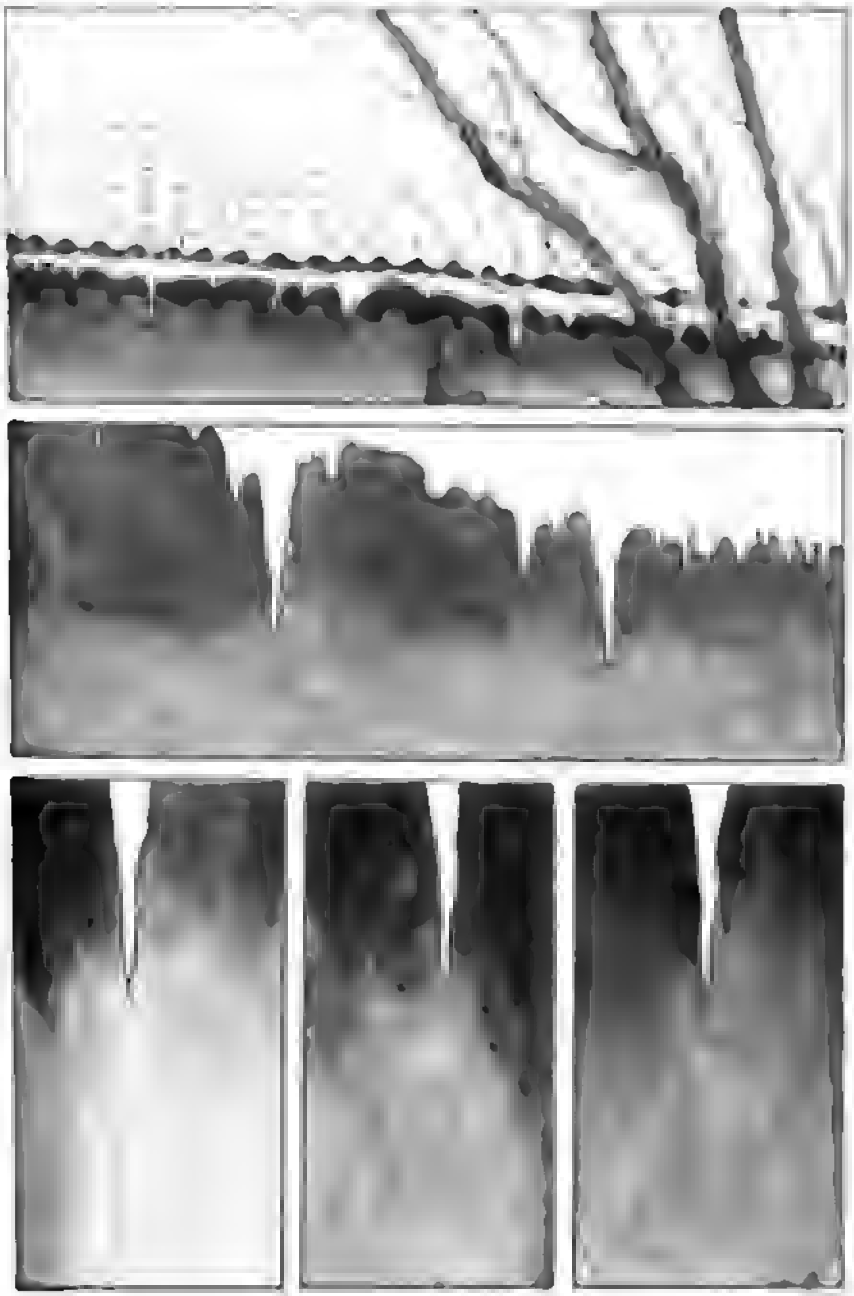
the hundred and thirteenth

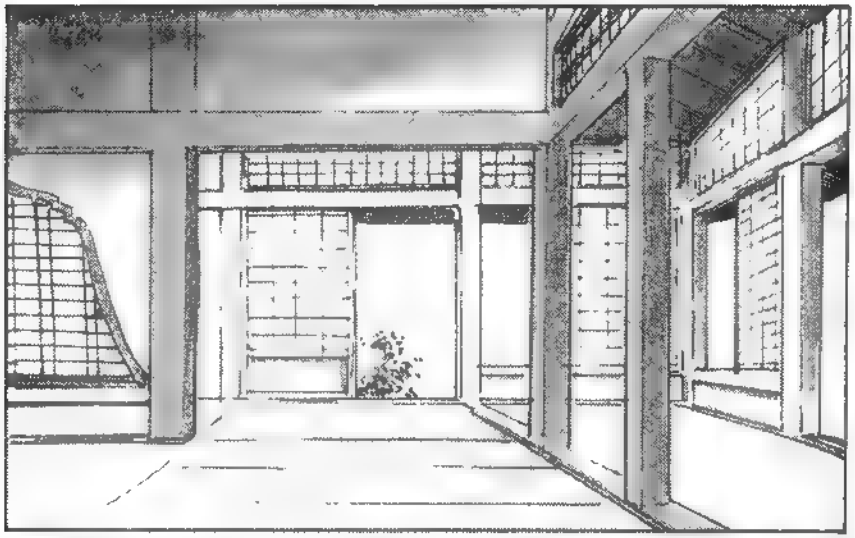
Tears of Ice

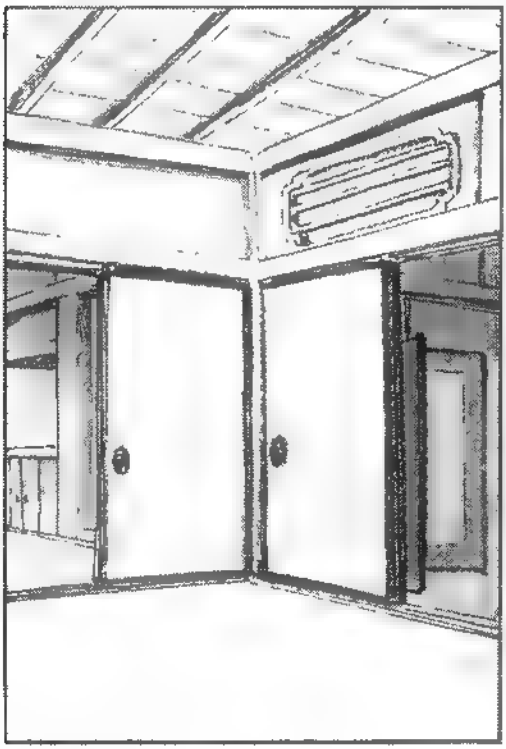


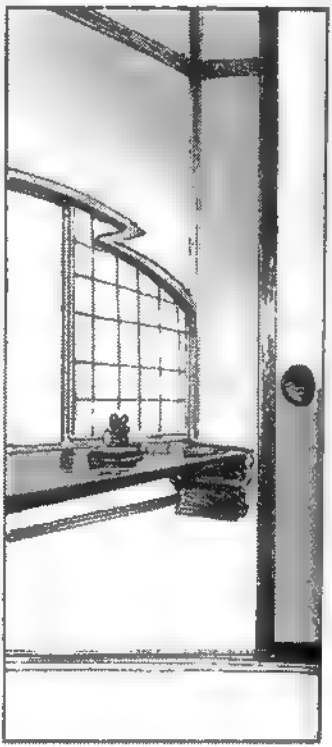


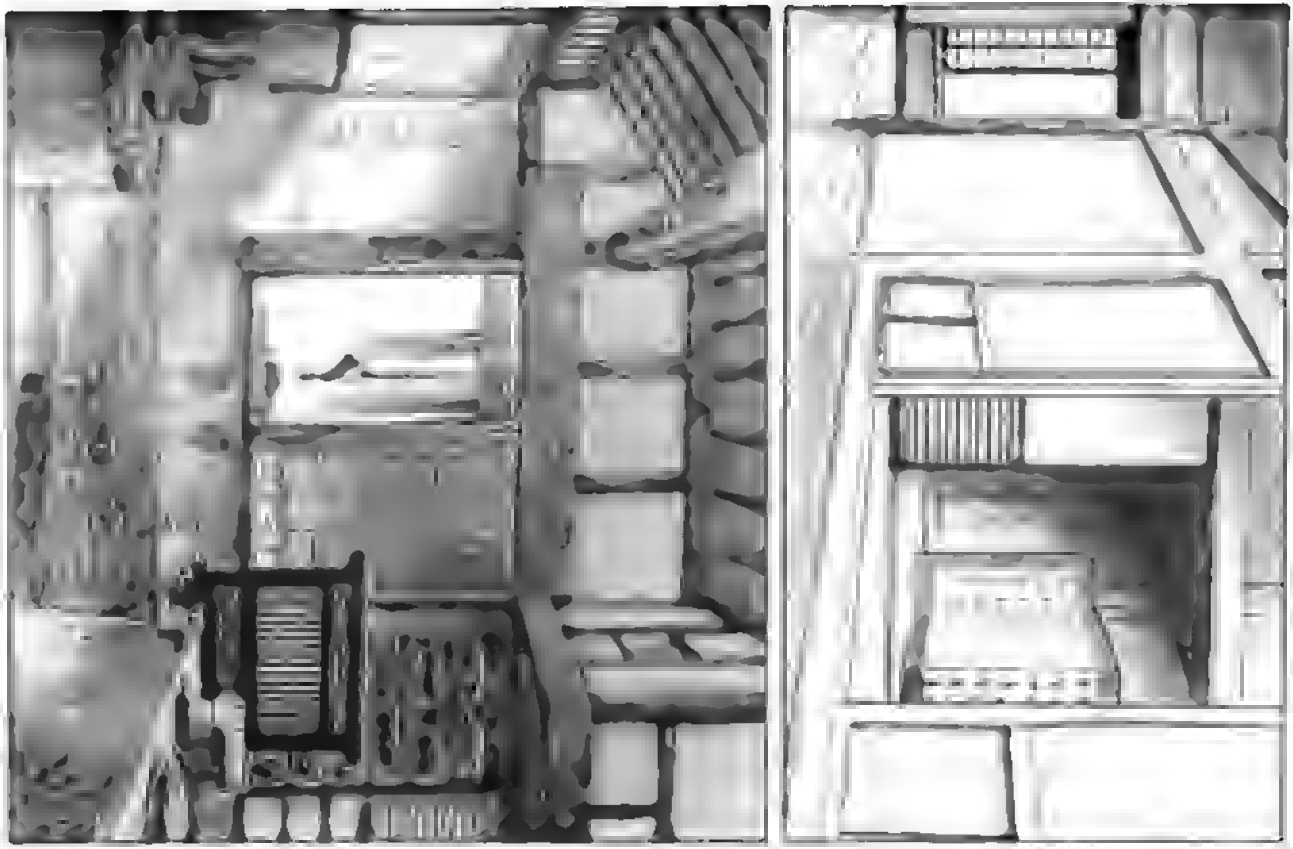










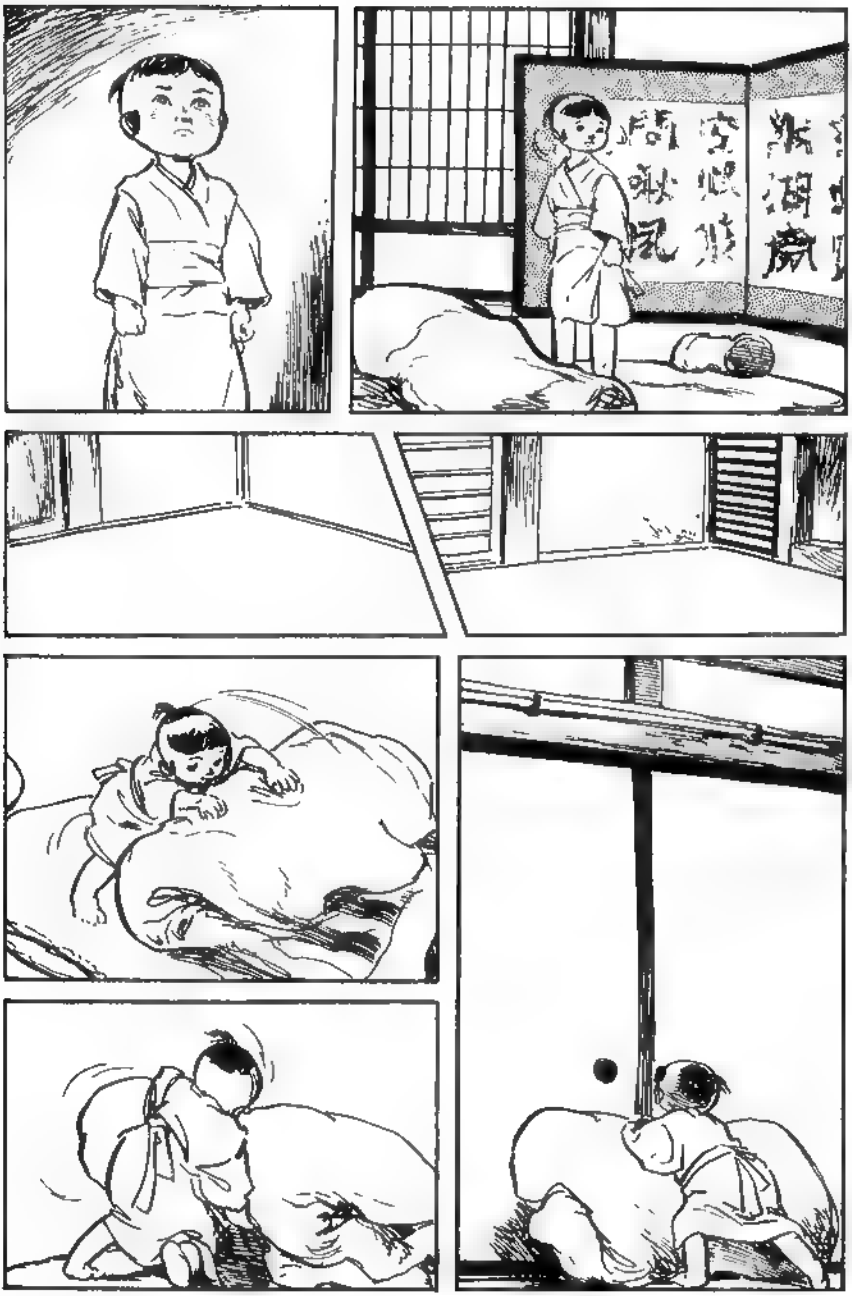


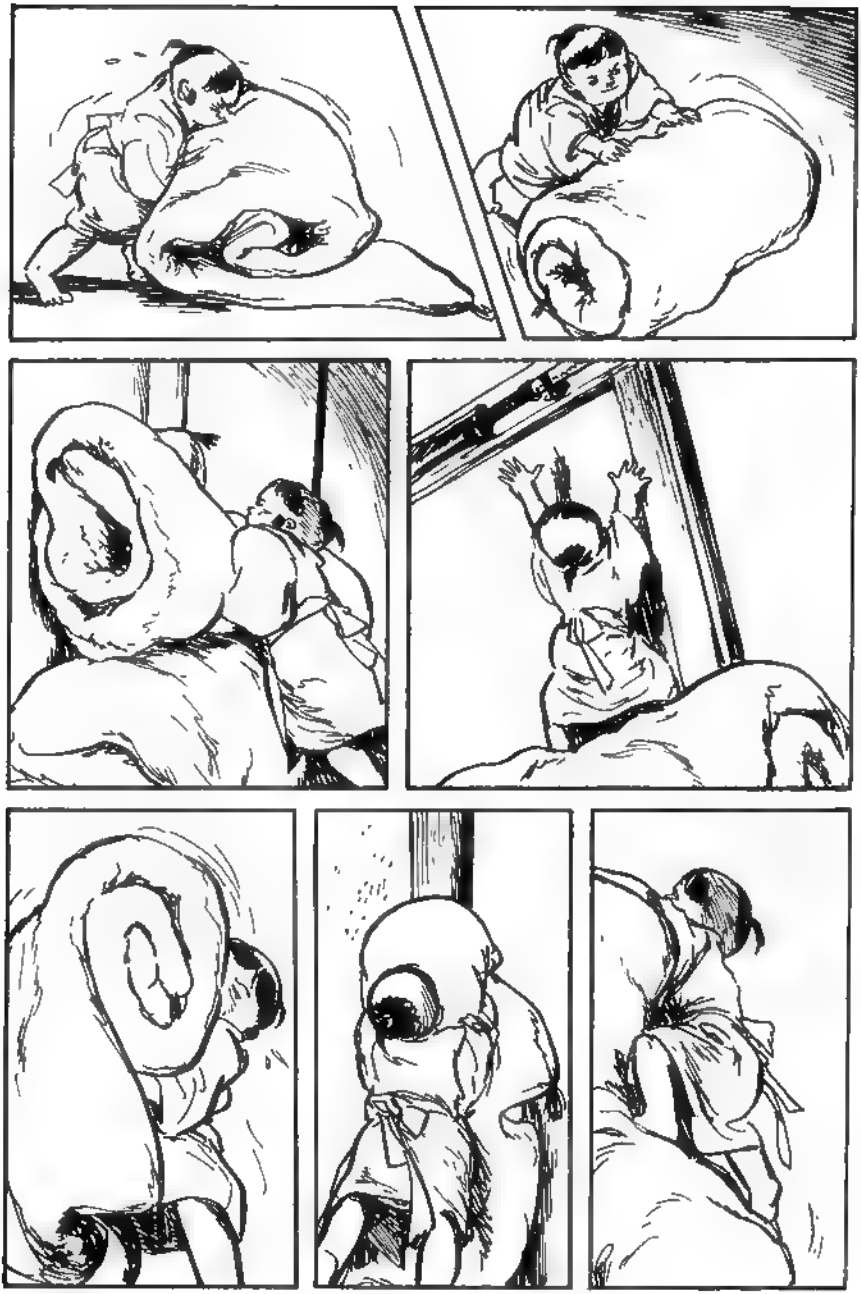
ICICLE. FOR WHOM DO YOU SHED YOUR TEARS OF ICE?
SORROW? FOR THE PASSING OF THE YAGYŪ?
OR ONLY PITY?
YES, I AM THE LAST LIRA-YAGYŪ. WE, WHOSE WORDS WERE ONCE FEARED ACROSS THE SIXTY STATES OF JAPAN!

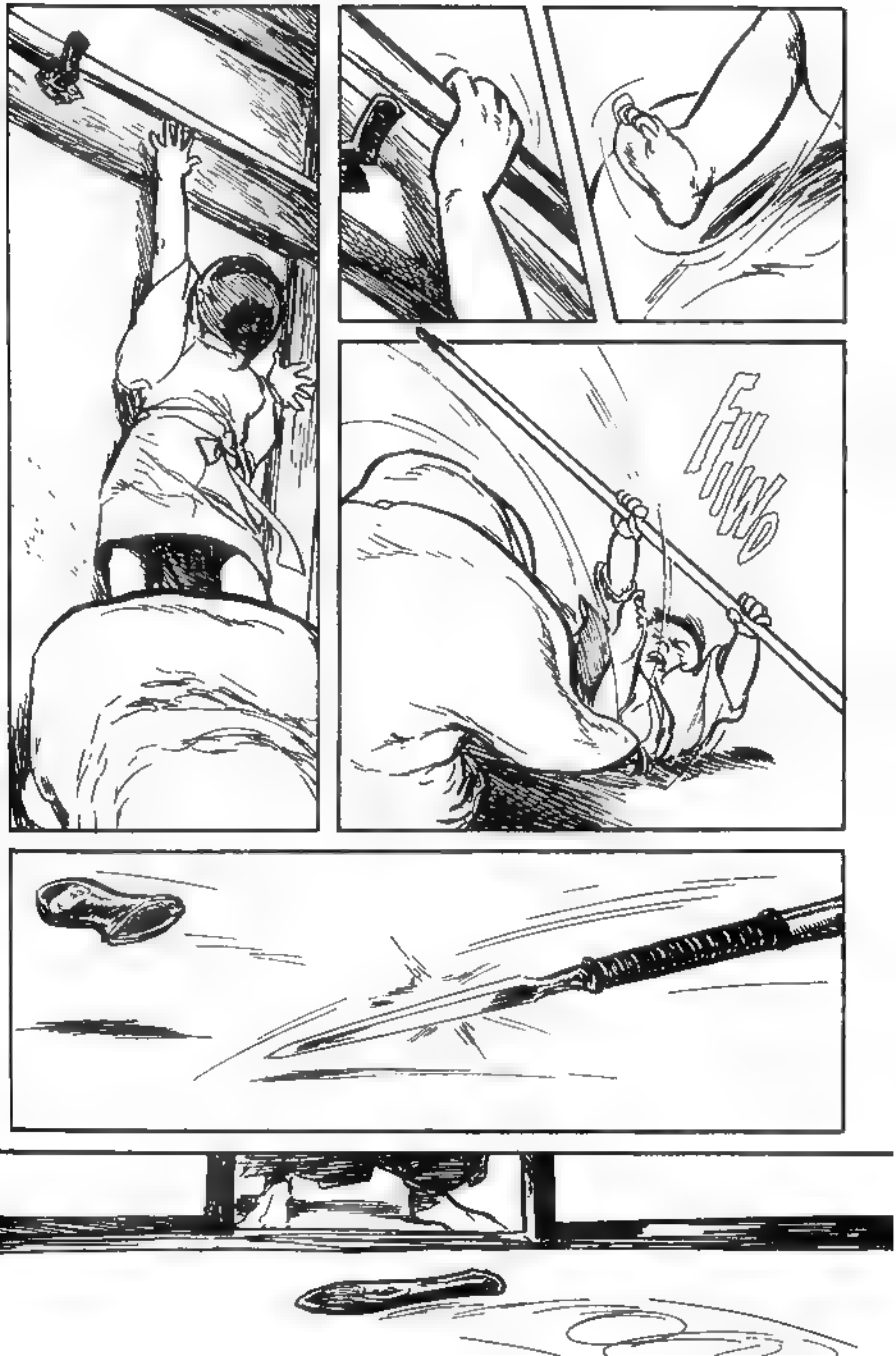
I THE SOLE SURVIVOR
AND YET...
TOO SOON FOR TEARS!
KRAK

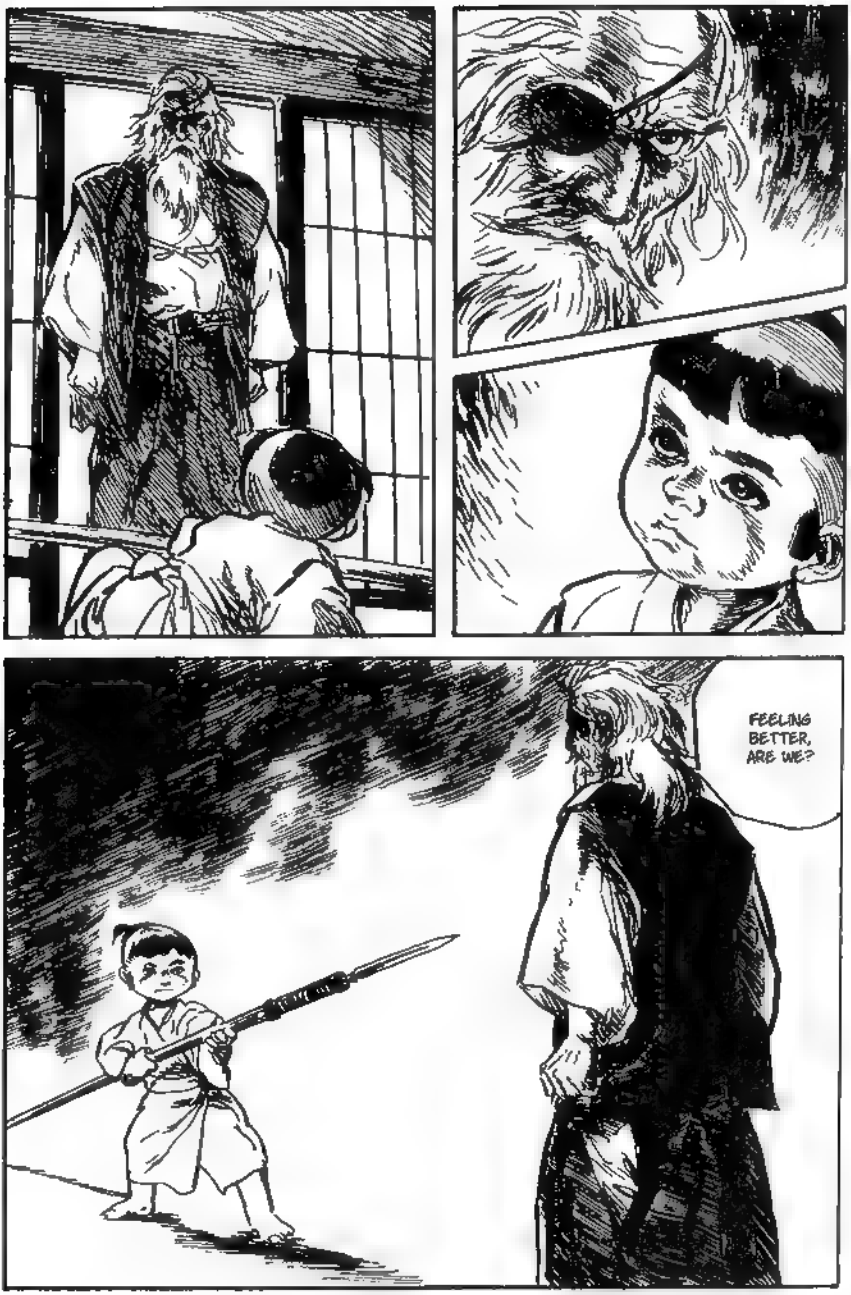
KSHING
BOAK
THERE WAS A SCENT
..ALL THE TIME HE'D SLEPT A SCENT NOT HIS FATHER'S.
ENVELOPING HIM.
A SCENT, LIKE AN ANCIENT CEDAR TREE.

AND A SCENT THAT WAS ALSO THE SCENT OF THE ENEMY AN *INSTINCT* CLOSE TO THE BEASTS', STIRRED AT THE BOTTOM OF HIS CONSCIOUSNESS... *FOUND* THAT SCENT FROM AMONG ALL OTHERS.
TOLD HIM IT WAS THE SCENT OF THEIR HATED FOE.
AND THAT *HE* WAS IN *ENEMY HANDS*...






FHWo


FEELING BETTER, ARE WE?

MY SWORD AND YOUR FATHER'S SWORD WERE STUCK IN THE EARTH.
YOU SAW THEM...?
THAT'S A PROMISE BETWEEN SAMURAI. I'LL EXPLAIN.

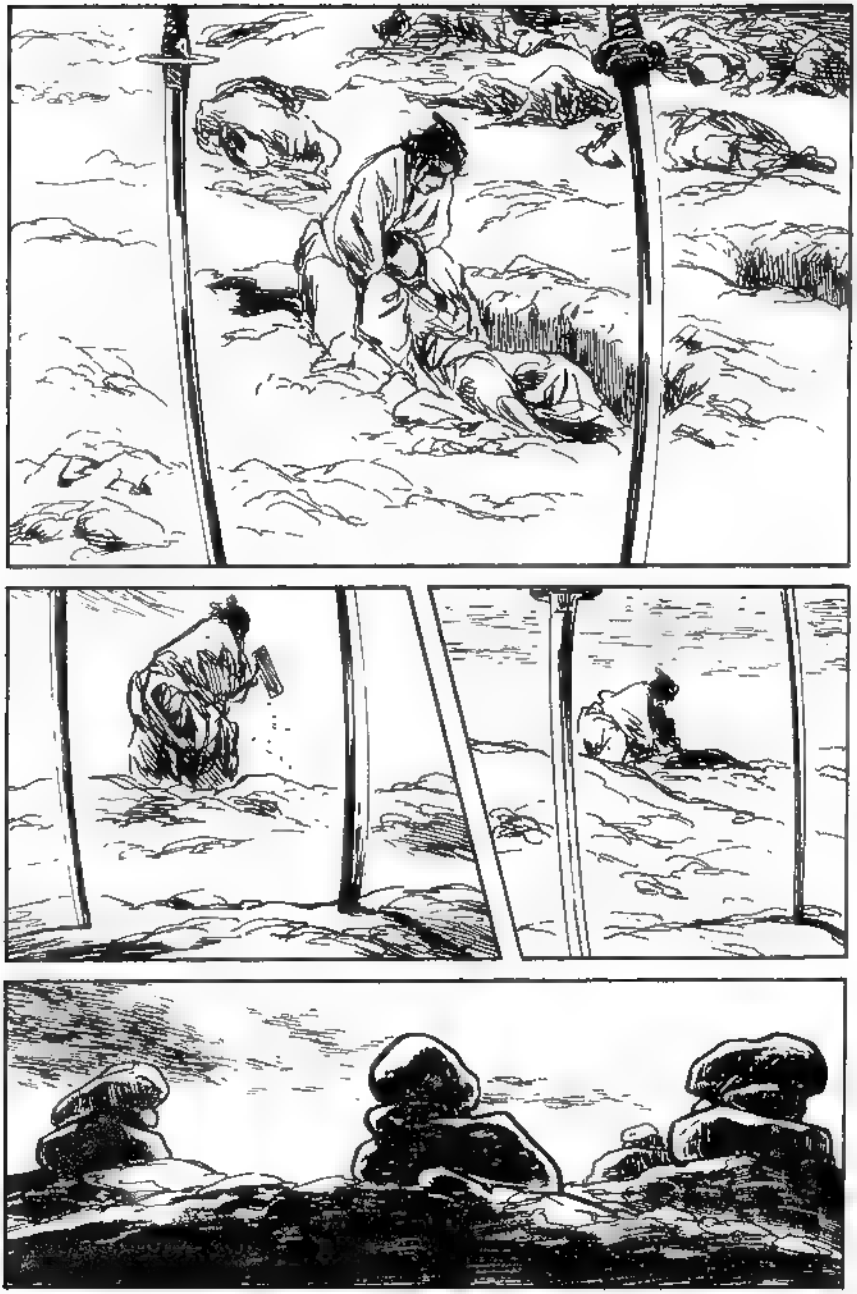
剣
IT MEANS TWO THINGS.
FIRST, THAT WE'LL NOT FIGHT AGAIN UNTIL WE TAKE UP OUR SWORDS.
IN OTHER WORDS...A TRUCE.
UNDER-STAND ..?

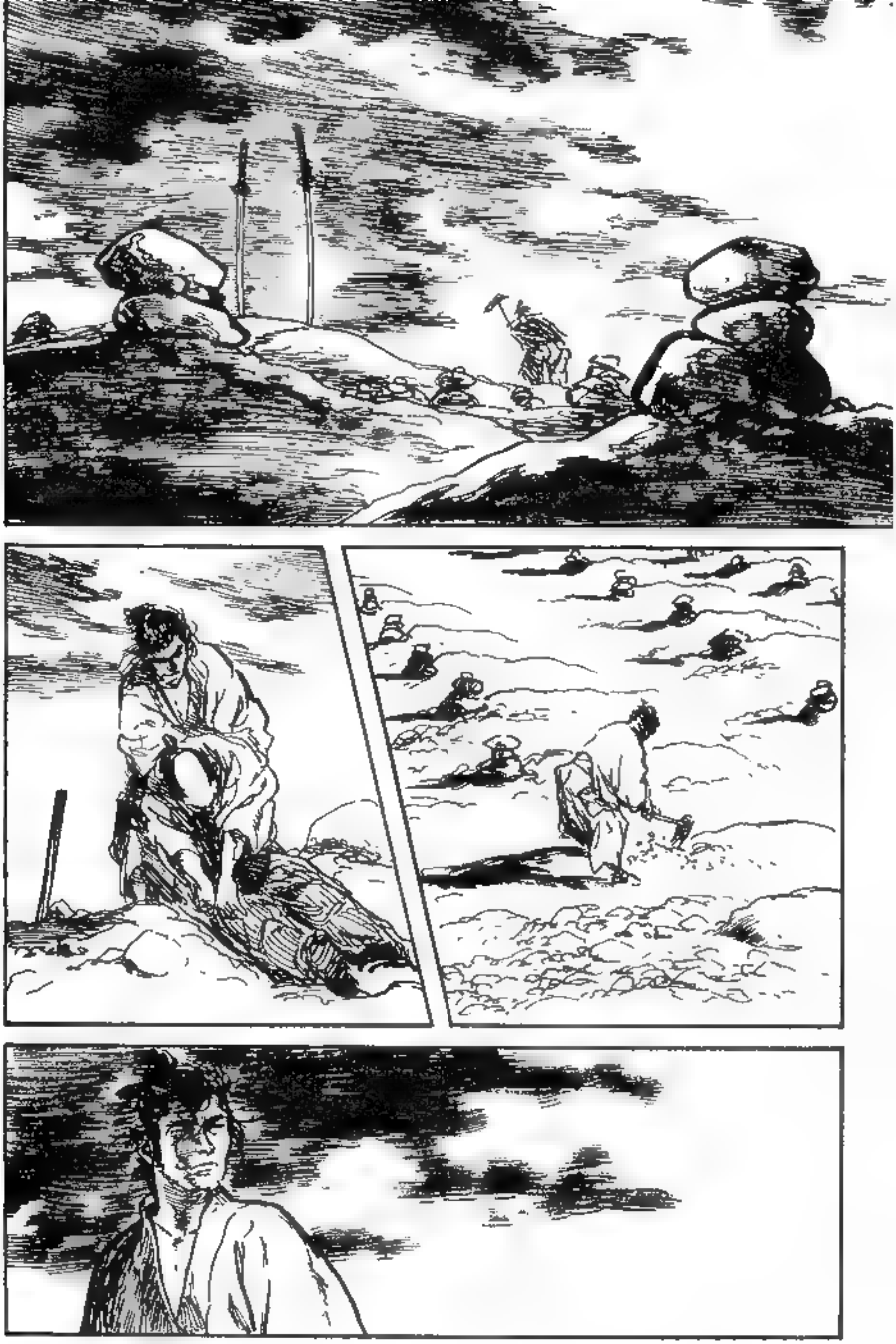
SO, FOR THE MOMENT, YOUR FATHER AND I ARE AT PEACE.
THE OTHER MEANING—A SILENT PROMISE. SO LONG AS WE LIVE, WE *WILL* TAKE UP THOSE SWORDS AGAIN, AND FIGHT TO THE *DEATH*.
YOUR FATHER *WILL* RETURN THERE.
AND SO WILL I.
WHEN THE TIME COMES, I'LL TAKE YOU WITH ME. A *SAMURAI* PROMISE.
I SEE YOU UNDER-STAND.
NOW, COME.

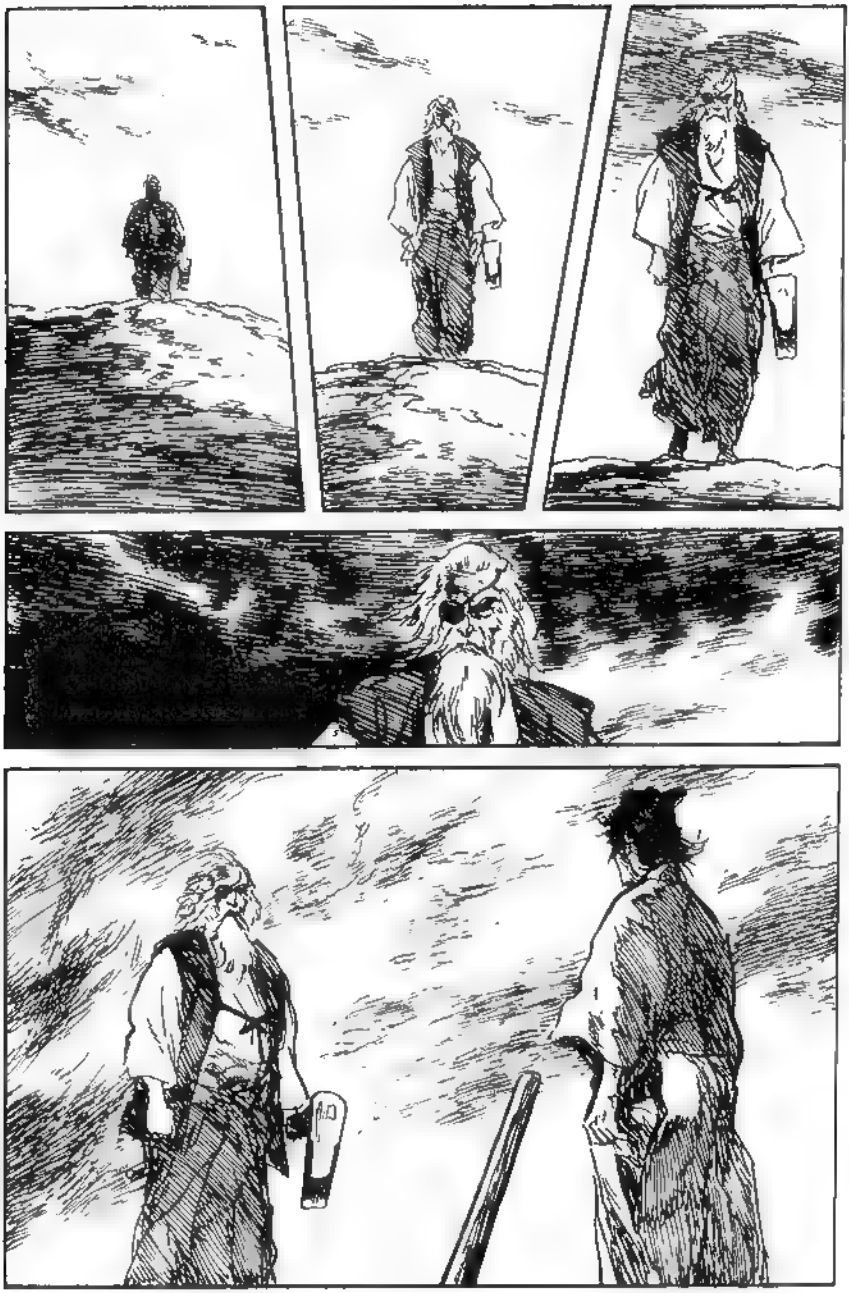
YOU FEEL NO FEAR?
I'VE ORDERED YOU *KILLED*, BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY I THOUGHT THAT IF I HELD YOU *HOSTAGE*, THAT DAMNED ITTŌ WOULD BE PARALYZED...
BUT I WAS WRONG HE'S NOT THE KIND OF MAN TO STAY HIS HAND, EVEN IF I HELD YOU.
MY ERROR I THOUGHT YOUR BONDS OF FATHER AND SON WERE LIKE ANY OTHERS.

HE BOASTS ABOUT MEIFUMADŌ, THE SIX PATHS.
BUT IN THE END, I WILL KILL YOU.
AFTER YOUR FATHER IS DEAD
SHISHŌGAN AND WILL.
IF I SPARE YOU, YOU'LL BECOME A DEADLY FOE.
AFTER I SETTLE THIS THING BETWEEN US, I MUST REBUILD THE YAGYŪ. I CANNOT DIE.
ACCEPT THIS.

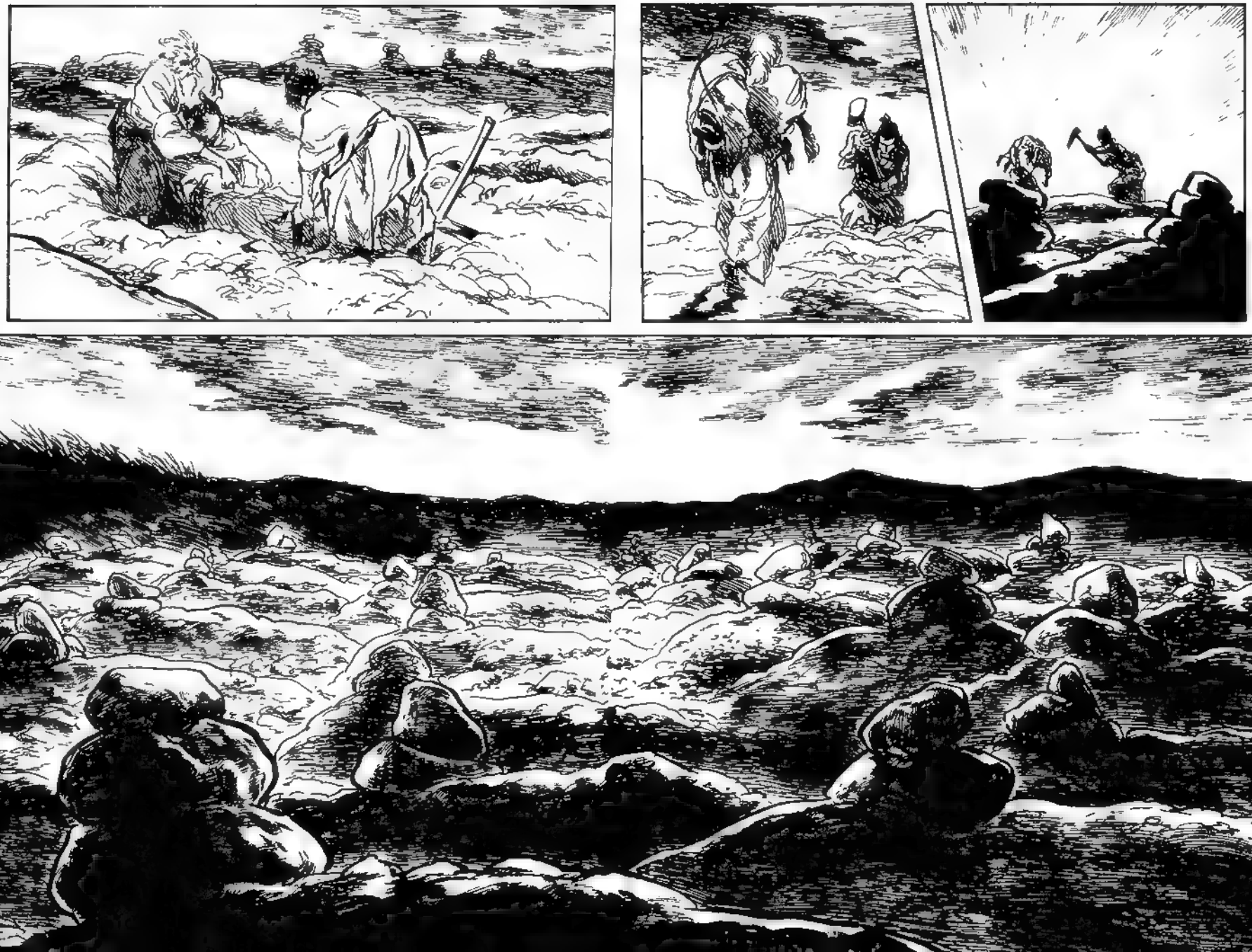
DAIGORO... YOUR FATHER IS HERE.
CHUKK
SHIIK
SHIGAK
CHNK
CHNK



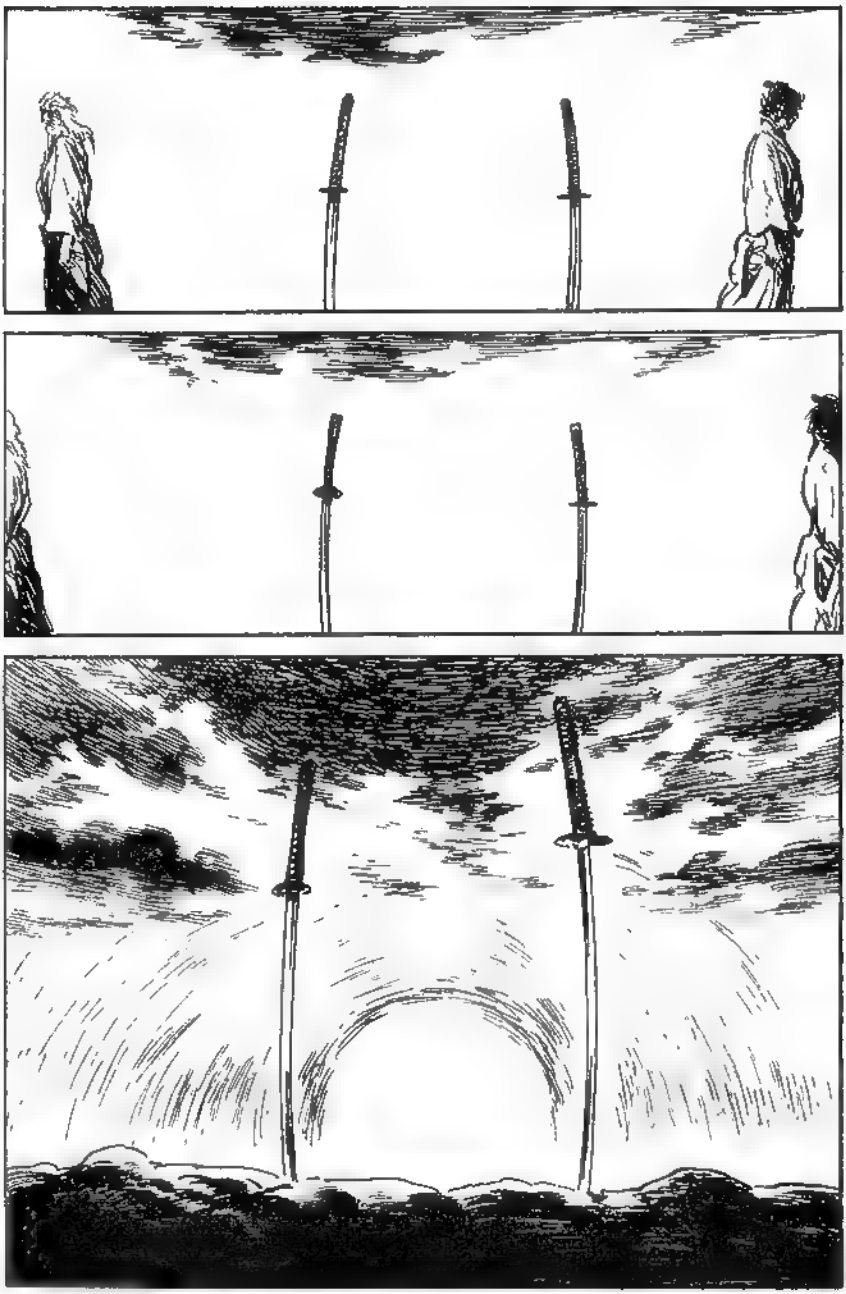


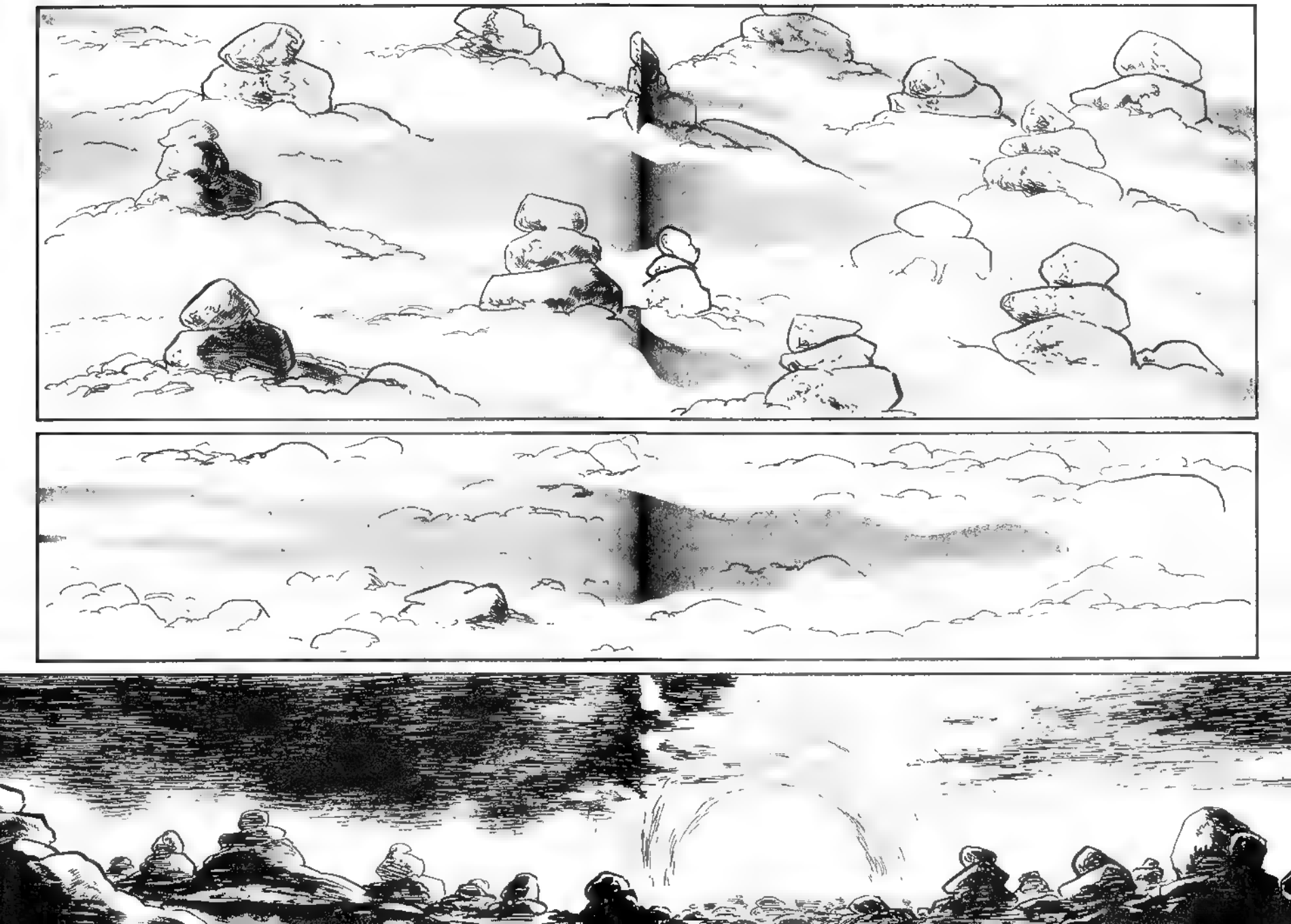


MY THANKS.
IT'S NOTHING.
DAIGORO'S WITH ME, UNSCATHED.
THANK YOU.
CHIKK
CHOK
SHOK



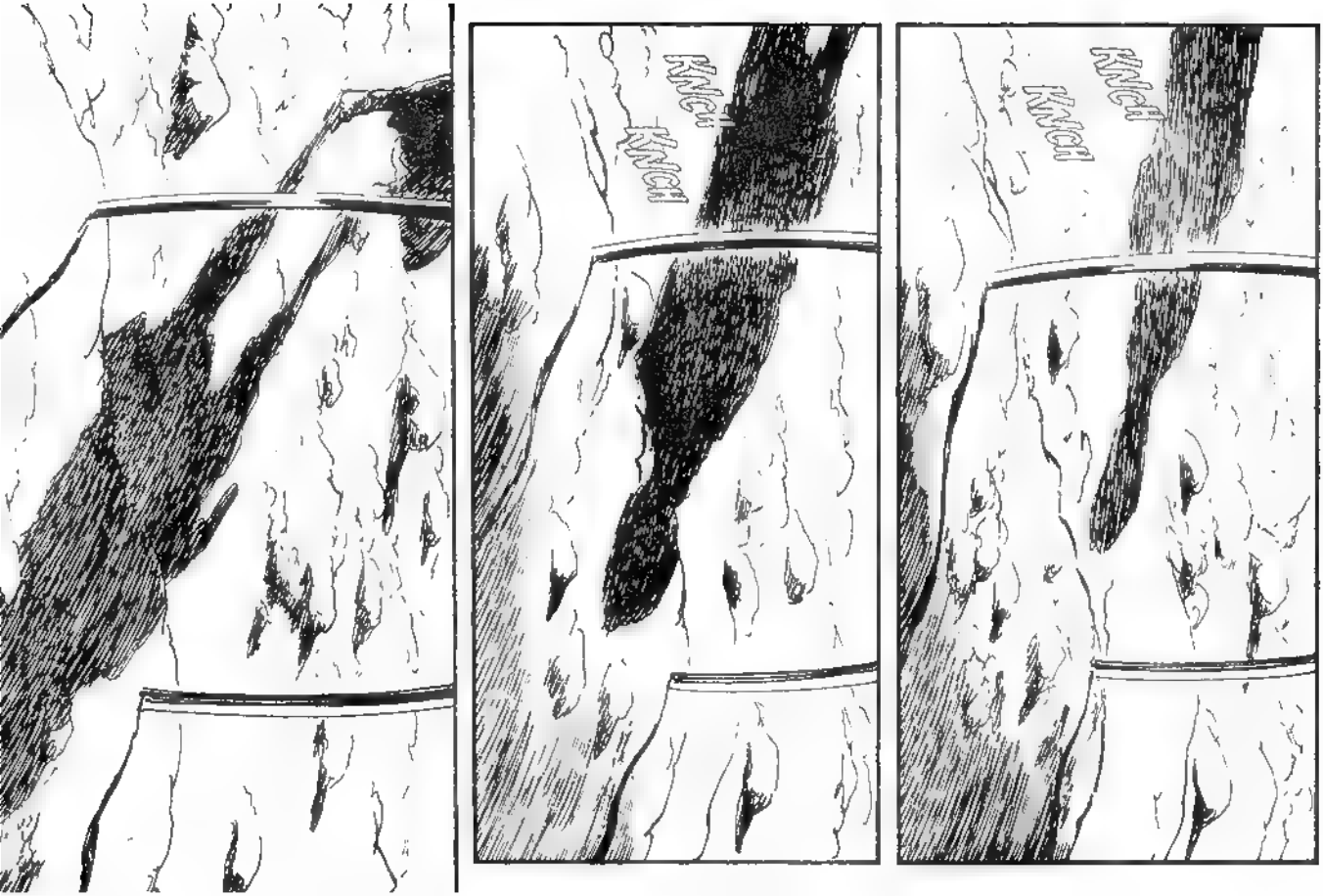
TOMORROW. AT NOON.
AT NOON.





KNCH

KNCH


KNCH
KNCH
KNCH
KNCH

HEE HEE HEE! SO THAT'S IT!
A PROMISE? COME BACK, AND HACK AWAY?
NAH! THE HEAVENS OPEN, MOUNTAINS SHAKE. AND BACK TO SQUARE ONE.
HEE HEE HEE!

SO. WHAT SHOULD I DO? LET'S GET THE OLD NOGGIN GOING!
CAN'T SCREW UP AGAIN.
IF RETSUDŌ AND ITTŌ GO AT IT, WHO DIES?
BEST IF THEY BOTH CROAKED BUT THAT WON'T HAPPEN.

SAY *RETSUDŌ* WINS. THAT'S THE MESSIEST MY POISON WON'T *TOUCH* THAT FLEA-BITTEN OLD TIGER.
AND HE'S GOT MY CONFESSION... IN *BLOOD*
SO I CAN'T TELL OUR LORD THAT YAGYŪ RETSUDŌ WAS BEHIND THE FLOOD. HMM...
BUT IF *ŌGAMI ITTŌ* WINS...?!
RETSUDŌ DEAD, AND *ŌGAMI* STILL HERE...?

YEEEK!
DON'T SAY IT! DON'T EVEN THINK IT!!
HE'S EVEN TOUGHER THAN RETSUDŌ!

C-CALM DOWN! JUST..CALM DOWN. FACT IS, I'M IN THE BEST POSITION OF ALL.
IF I PLAY MY CARDS RIGHT, I CAN MAKE OUT LIKE A BANDIT.
JUST AS LONG AS I DON'T OPEN THE WRONG WATER GATE AGAIN.
KONK
WHAT A DOPE, ABE! HOW COULD YOU BE SO DUMB?
BUT HEAVEN DIDN'T DUMP ME. IT GAVE ME A SECOND CHANCE.
GOTTA GET IT RIGHT

PROBLEM IS. EITHER ONE WINS, I LOSE.
THEY'RE BOTH TOO STRONG
ARROWS, MAYBE...?
NAW, THEY'RE TOO GOOD.
WAIT, WAIT IF I CAN'T BEAT EITHER WINNER THERE'S ALWAYS AIUCHI!
YES! AIUCHI! THEY KILL EACH OTHER! IF THEY BOTH DIE, EVERYTHING'S SOLVED!

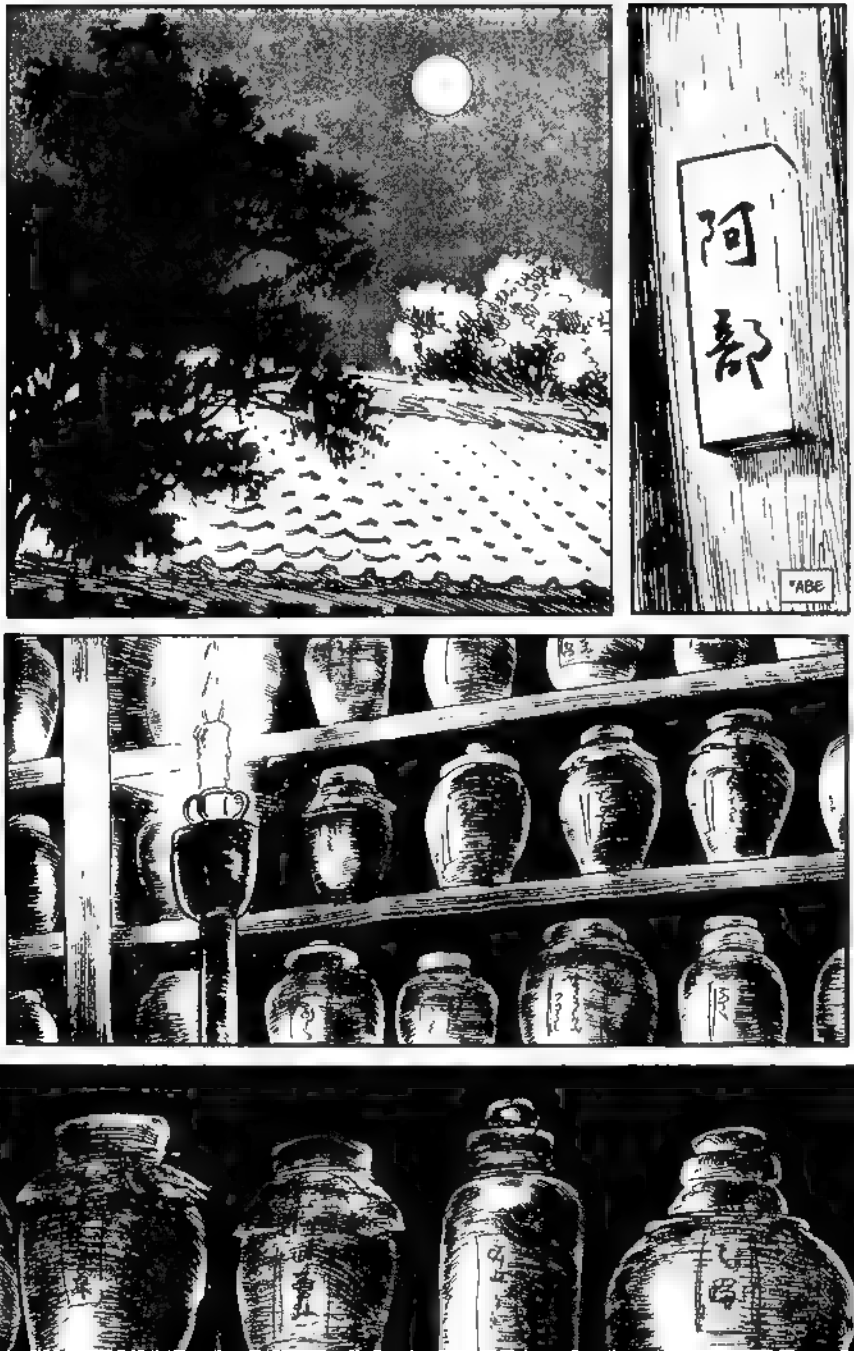
AIUCHI! HEE, HEE!
I JUST NEED TO MAKE SURE THEY KILL EACH OTHER..
AND I MAKE THE REAL KILLING! WITHOUT LIFTING A FINGER!
BUT. HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN..?
AYE, THAT'S THE RUB.
HRM..
THIS IS RETSUDŌ
AND THIS IS ITTŌ.
THIS SWORD HITS THAT SWORD...

HEH! HEE HEE! BWEH HEH HEH!
NO, IT'S TOO EASY!
BWA HAW HAW HAW!!
TOO EASY!! HA HA HA HA!
BWA HAW HAW HAW
I JUST PAINT BOTH SWORDS WITH POISON! BWAH HAH HAH HAH!
TOO SIMPLE FOR WORDS!

AND HERE THEY ARE! WAITING FOR THE POISONER!
HA HA HA HA
THE GODS DO LOVE ME!
HA HA HA HA
I'M THE LUCKIEST MAN ALIVE!
BWEH HEH HEH
HA HA
HEAVEN KNOWS THEY'RE MASTER SWORDSMEN!
THEY'LL BOTH GET CUT UP, AT LEAST A BIT!
NO MATTER WHICH ONE WINS, THE OTHER ONE'LL BE HURT. SO IF I POISON BOTH THEIR BLADES, THE SURVIVOR GOES, TOO.

IT'S AN AILICHI FOR SURE!
BWAH HAH HAH—
HAH- CHOO!
KSS
GRIND AND MIX, MIX AND GRIND... POISONER'S CHILD!
PASS AROUND YOUR SAKE CUP
TO DRINK YOUR POISON BY!

MOMMA'S MILK SO SWEET, DRINK UNTIL YOU DROWN!
POISON SO BITTER, HARD TO KEEP IT DOWN!
GRIND AND MIX, MIX AND GRIND... POISONER'S CHILD!
PASS ME YOUR TEA CUP, TO DRINK YOUR POISON BY!
POISON SO BITTER, HARD TO KEEP IT DOWN! MOMMA'S MILK SO SWEET, DRINK UNTIL YOU DROWN!
AH HAH HAH HAH
HAH HAH HAH HAH HAH HAH HAH


阿部
*ABE

GRSS
GRSS
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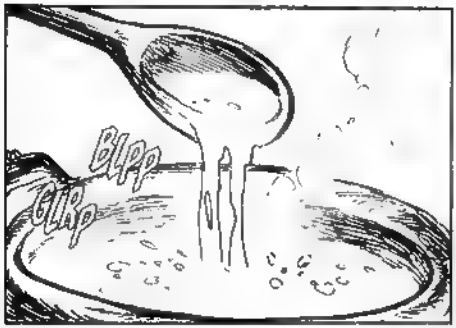
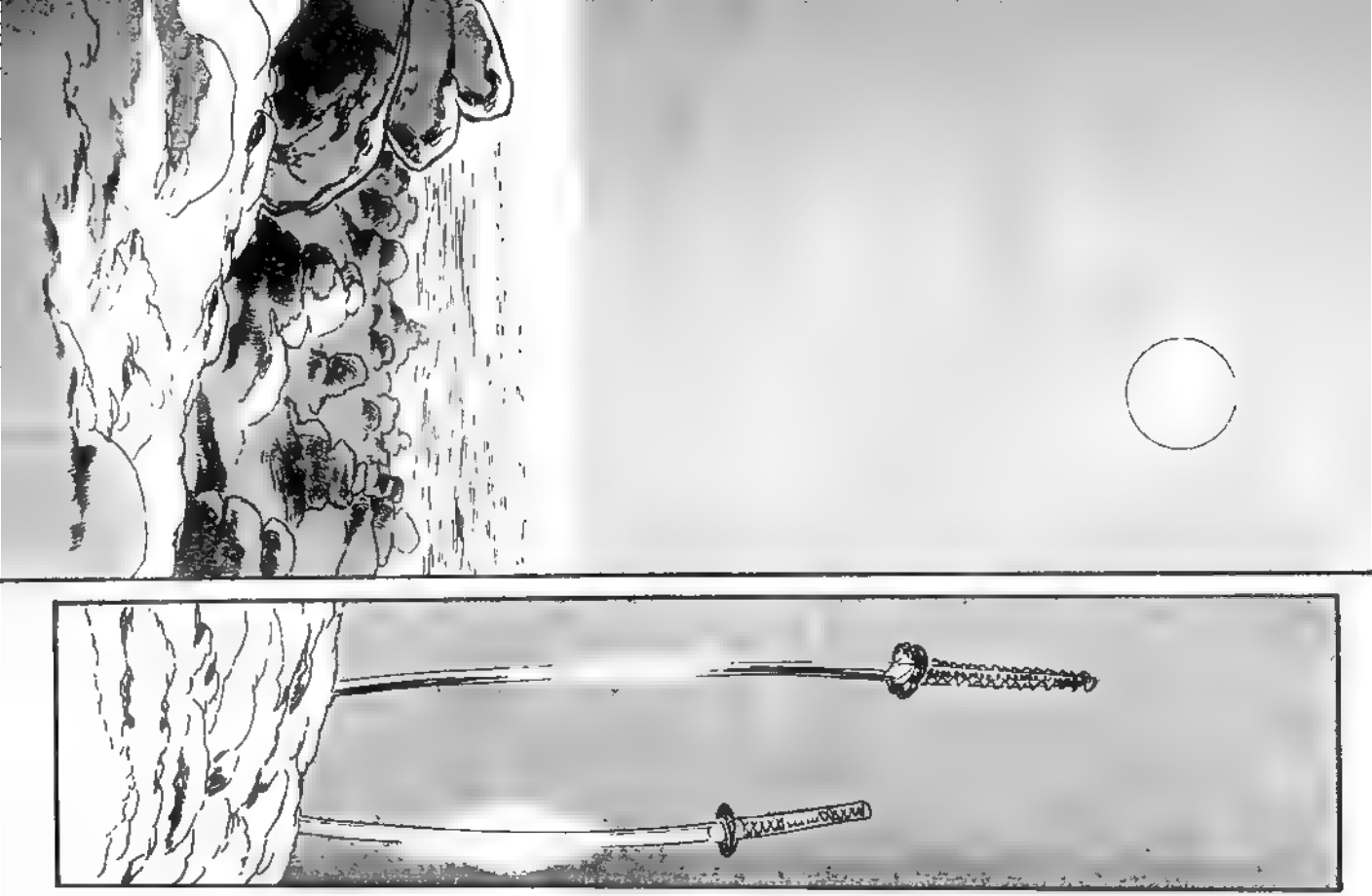
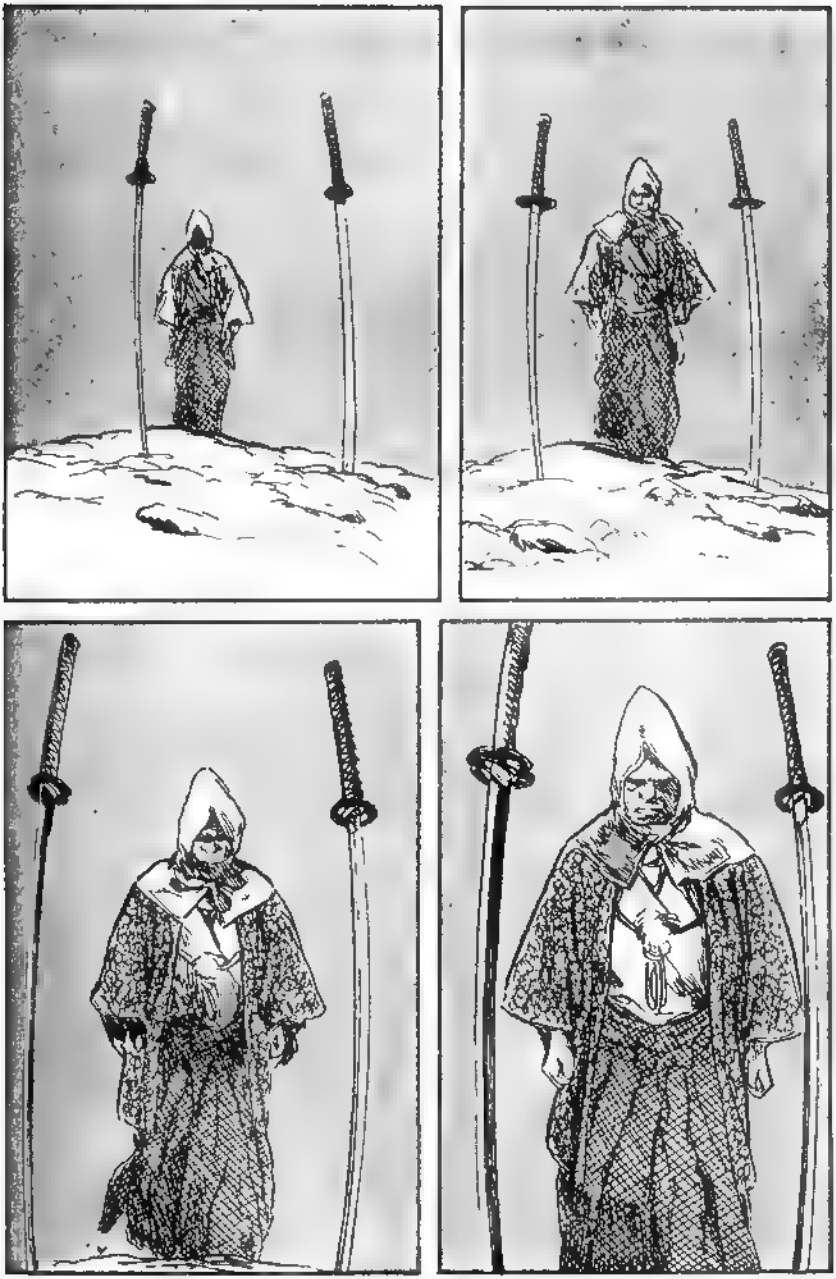

BLRP
GLRP





ONE STROKE, TWO STROKES, THREE!
THREE DEATH STROKES...
THEN POWER FOR ME!

ONE STROKE, TWO STROKES, THREE!
THREE DEATH STROKES. . . THEN POWER FOR ME!
HEH HEH HEH. NO ITTŌ-RYŪ, NO KUROKUWA, NO ŌGAMI ITTŌ...
THEN THE SHOGUNATE'S SHADOW POWER WILL BE ABE-NO-KAII, THE KUCHIYAKU.
HOW TIMES DO CHANGE.
HEE HEE HEE!

I'LL RULE THE NATION . . . ME!
NOT THE URA-YAGYŪ.
AND HE SAID I WASN'T A SAMURAI. NOT EVEN WORTH CUTTING!
ME, BASTARD SON OF GOD KNOWS WHO.
TAKE THAT, RETSUDŌ!
OH?! I ALWAYS WANTED TO SAY THAT!
AND I CAN! I'M NOT A SAMURAI!
TAKE THAT!!

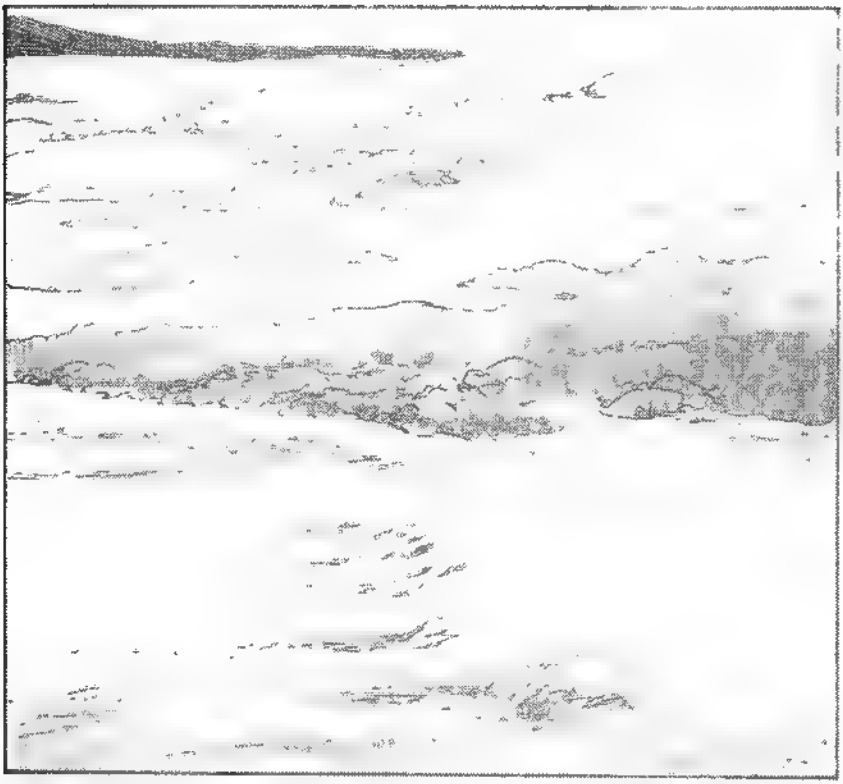
RETSUDŌ AND ITTŌ CAN *NEVER* SAY ANYTHING LIKE THAT! BUT I CAN!
GO TO *HELL*, RETSUDŌ!
GO TO *HELL*, ITTŌ!
YOU HEAR MEEEEE?!

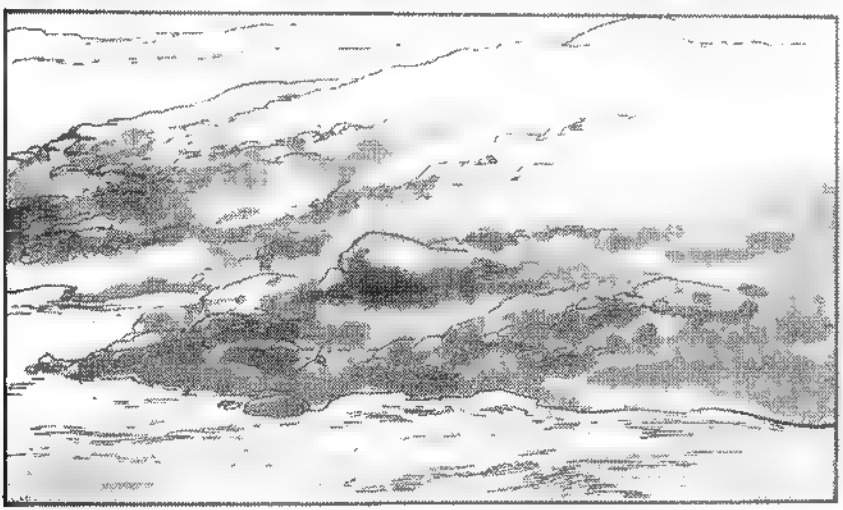
JUST YOU TAKE THAT!
YOU BASTARDS!
TAKE THAT!!

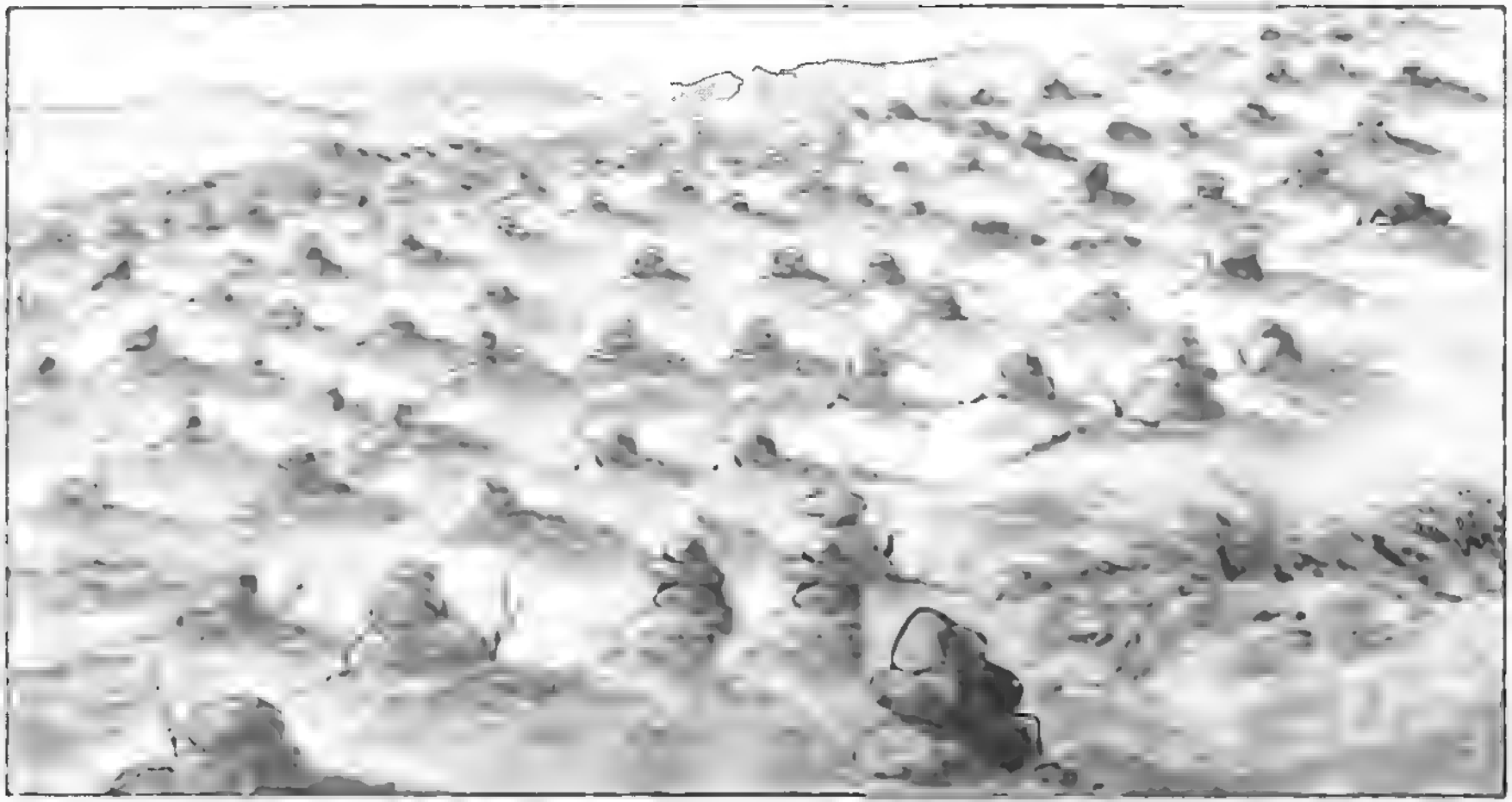
TFT
The Furry Triangles
We Love Beavers.

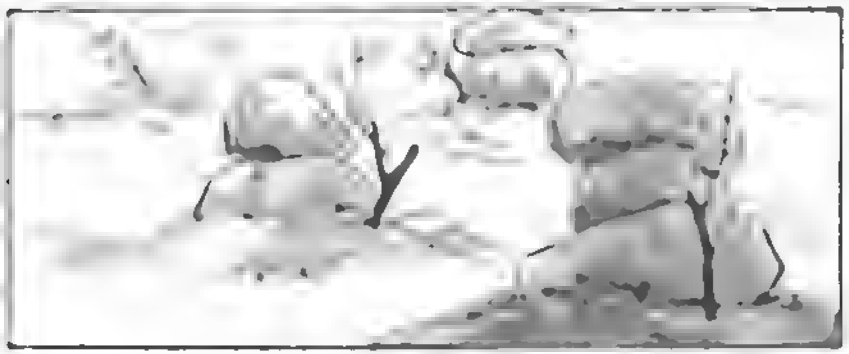
the hundred and fourteenth

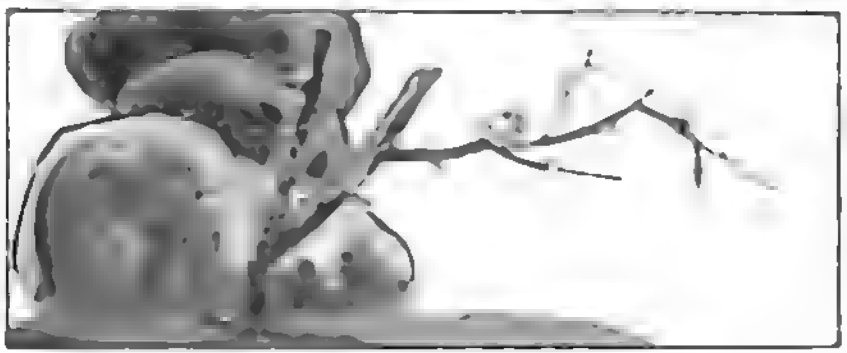
The Day of Meeting

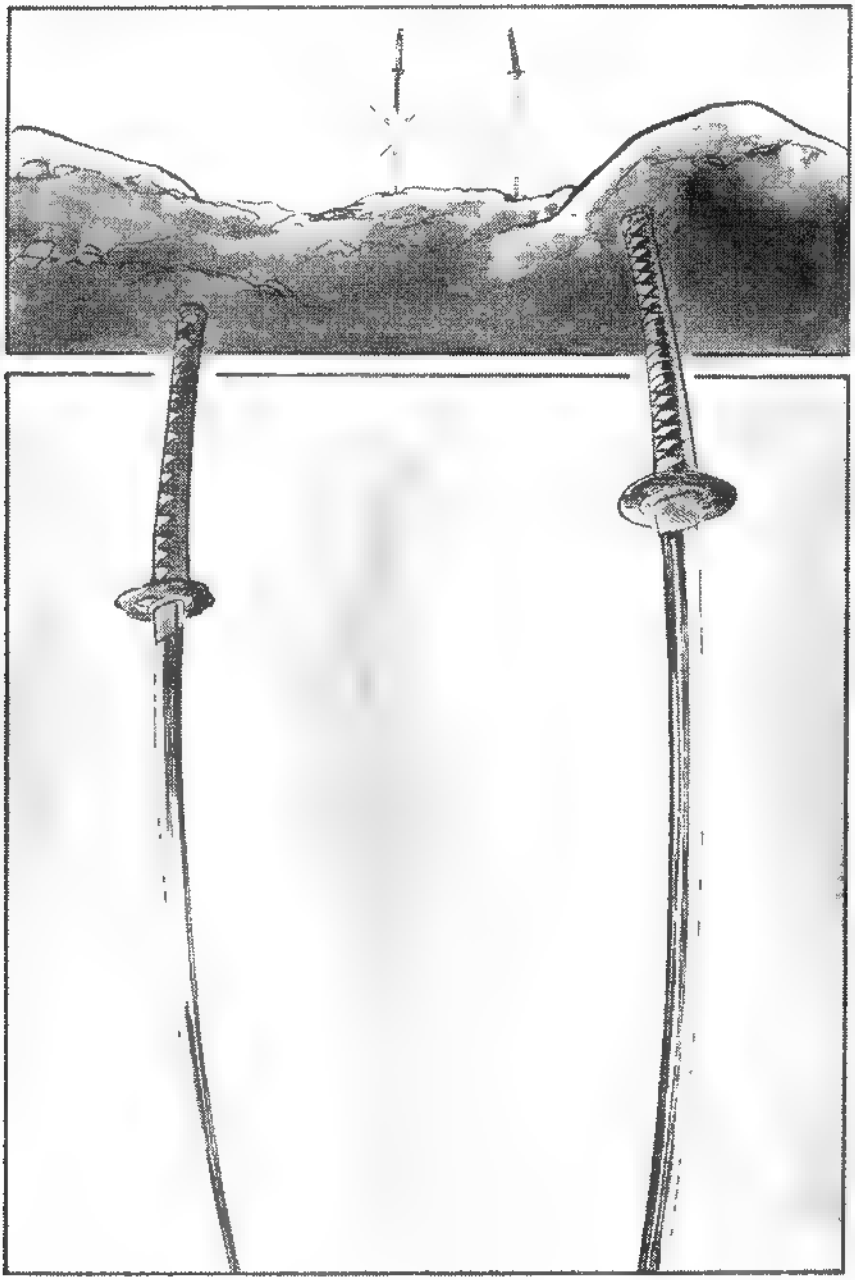


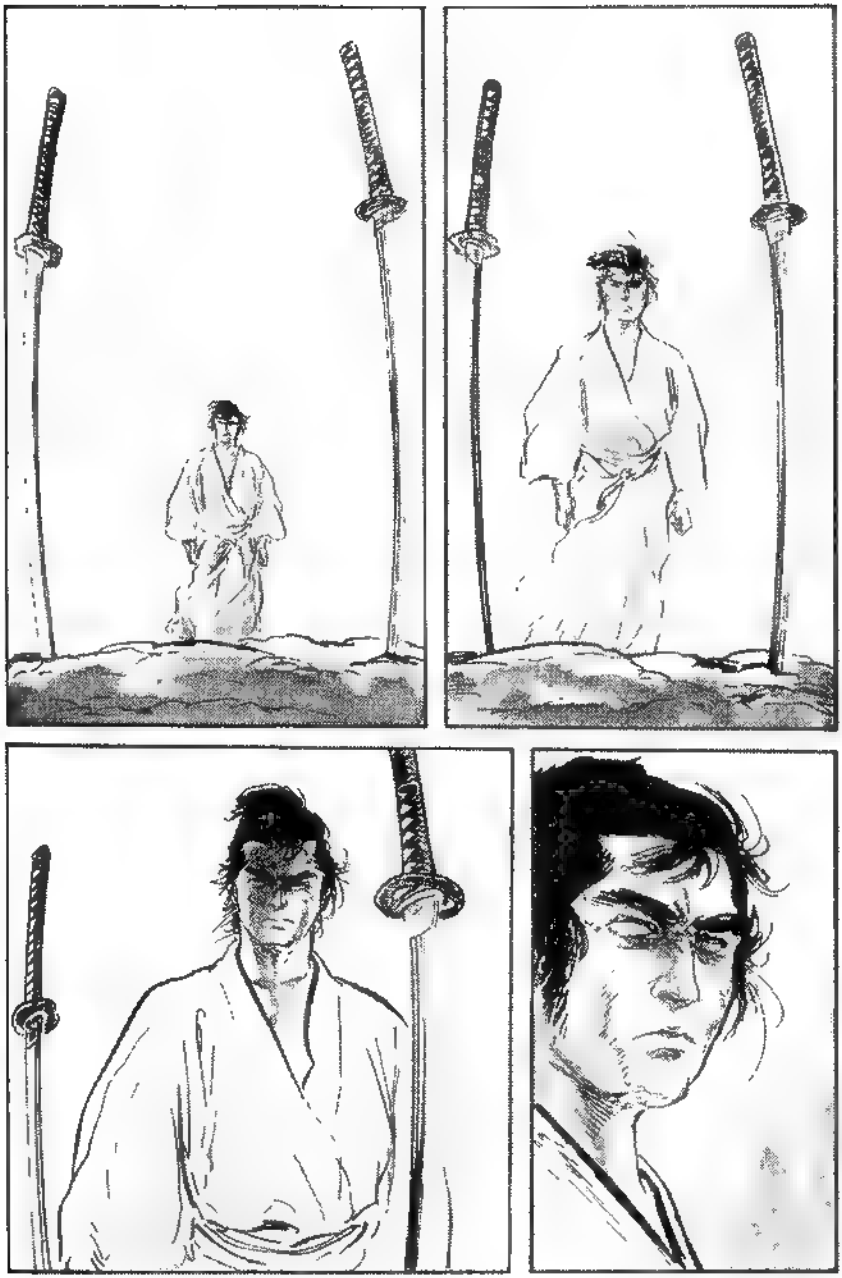


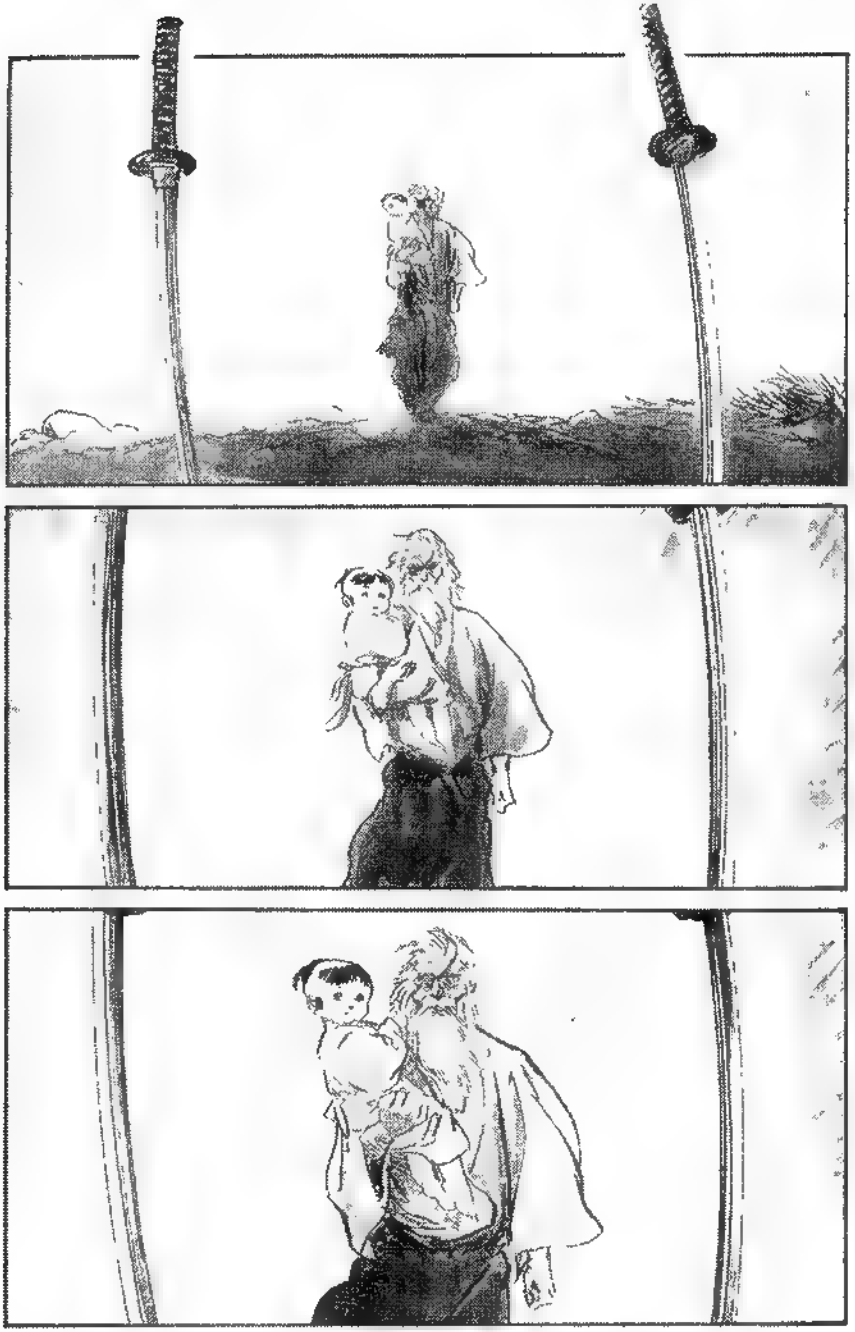




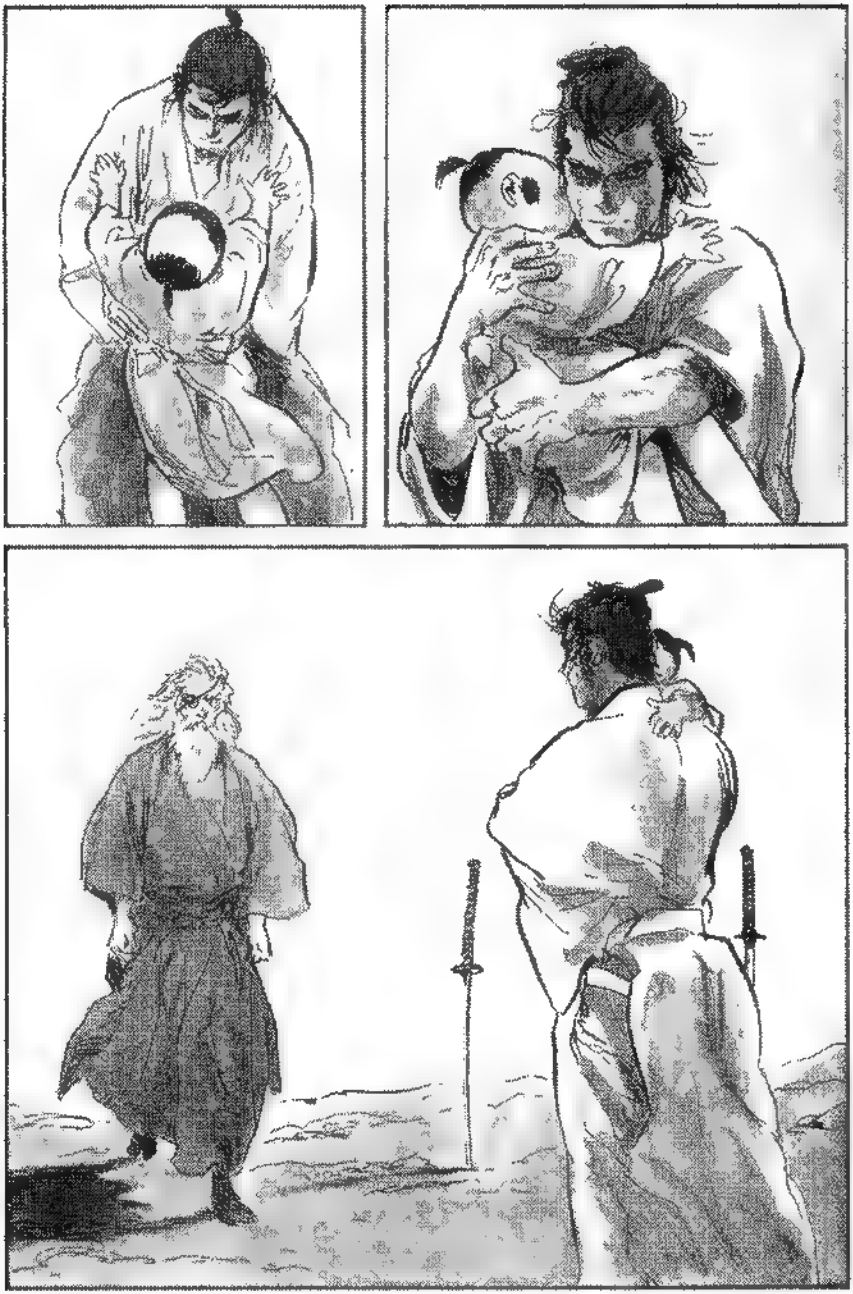




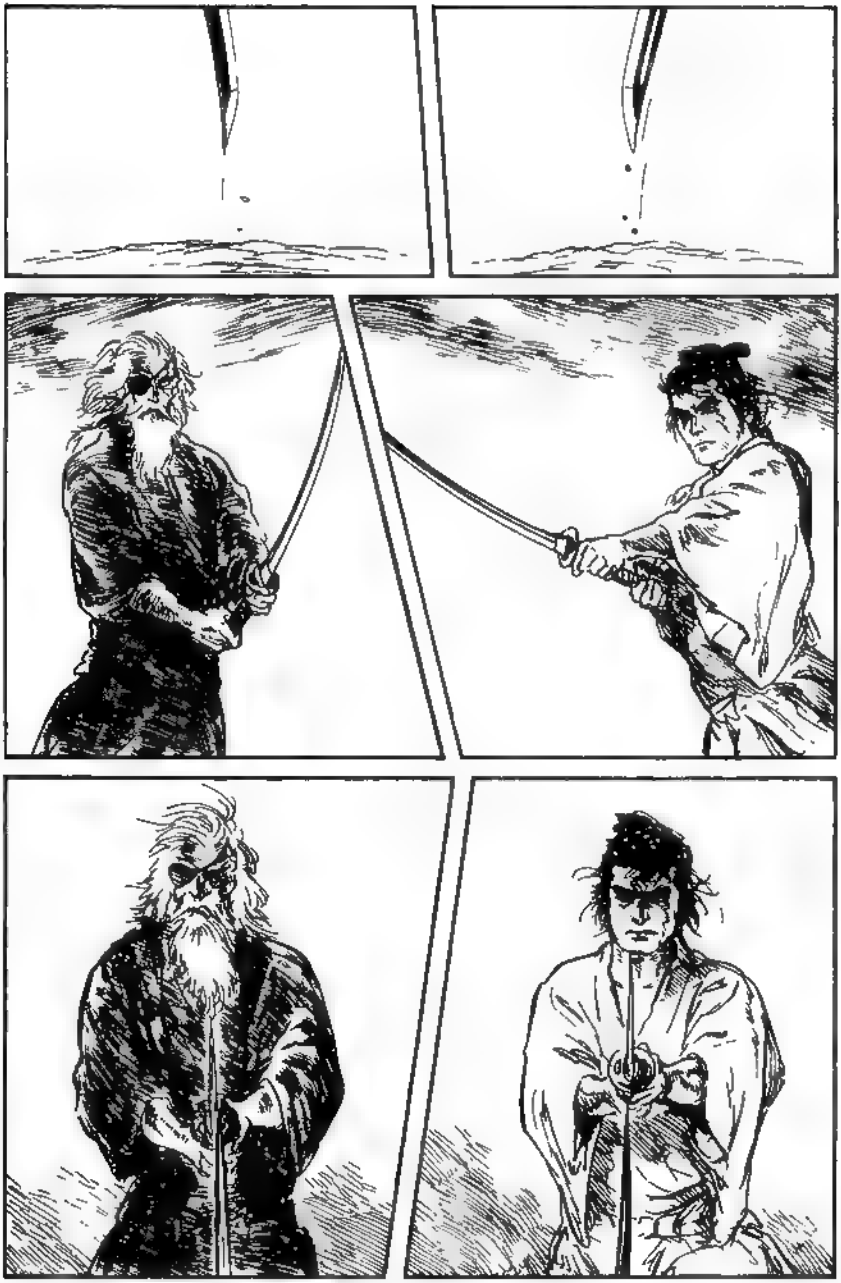


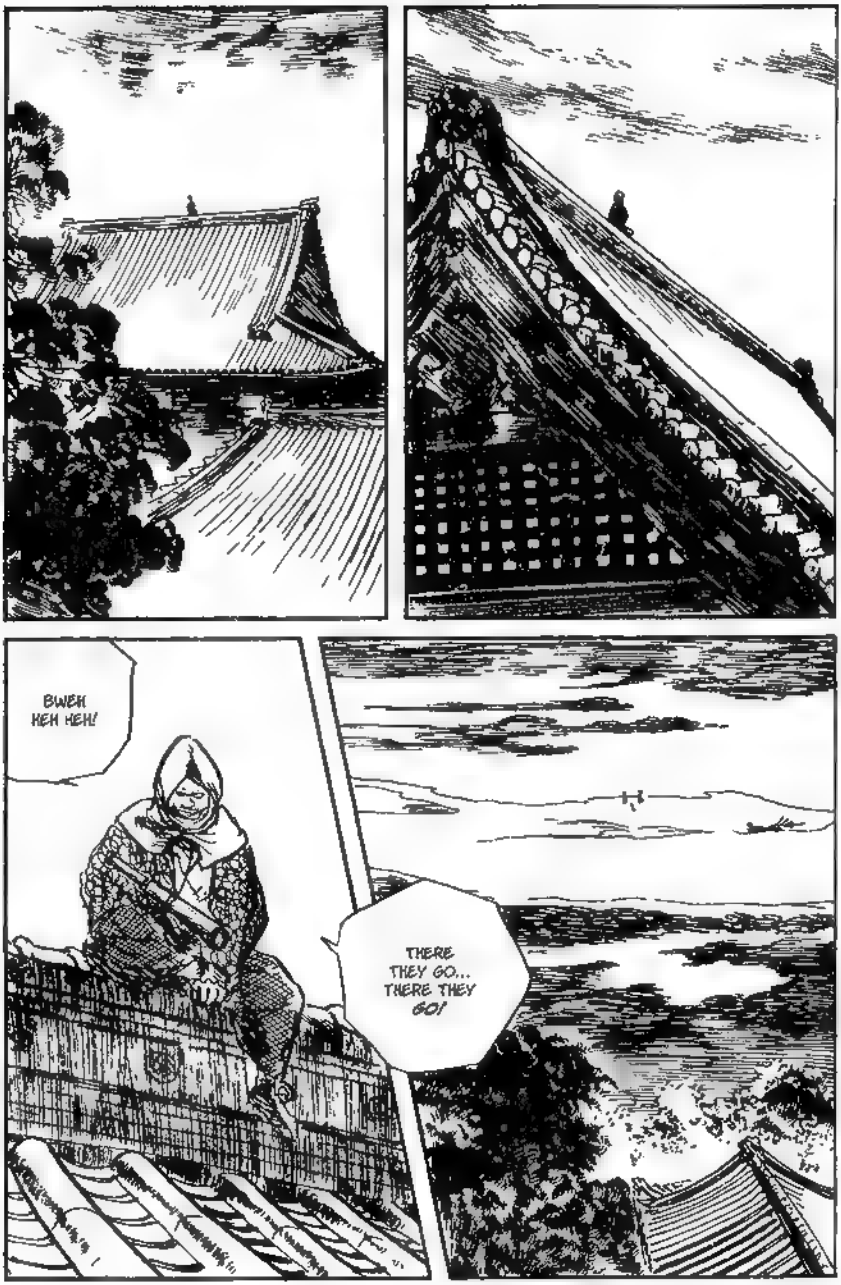


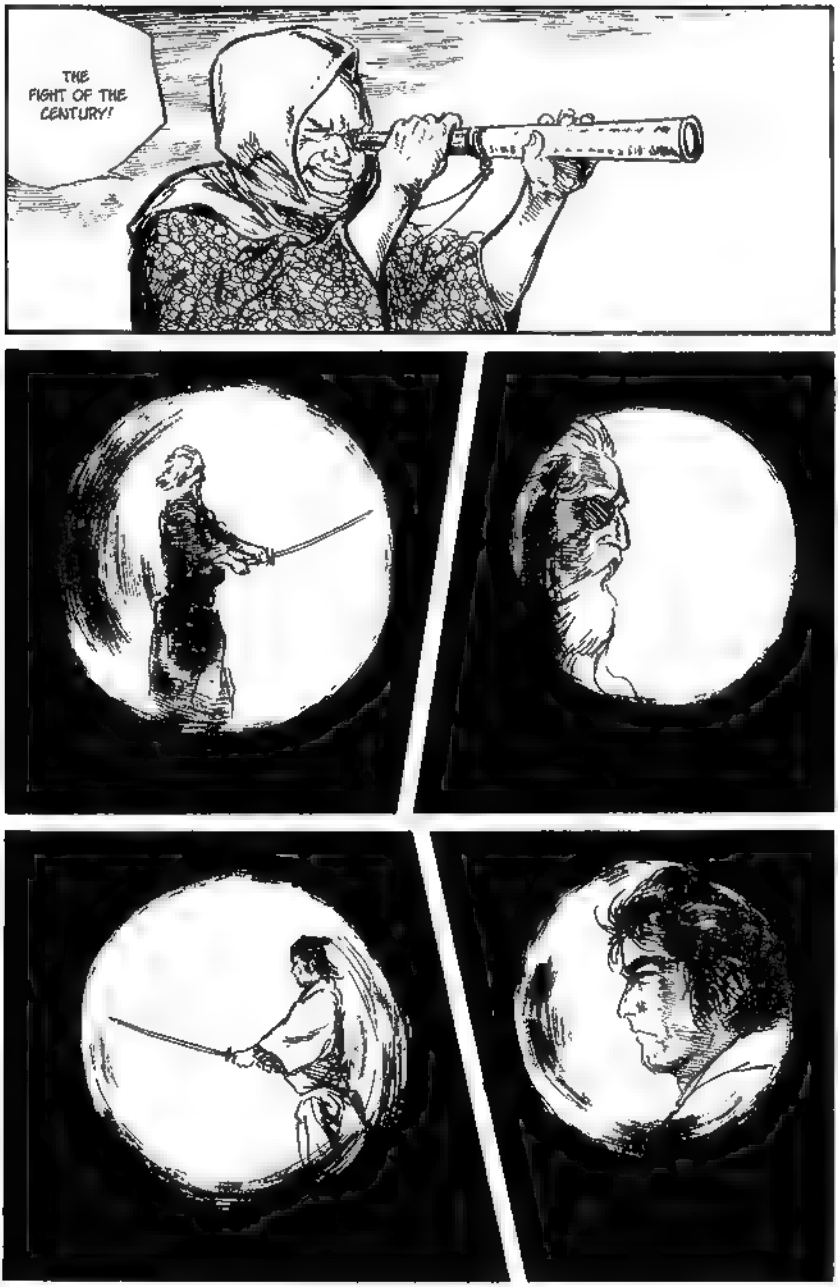
PAPAAA!



FIGHT!
READY!

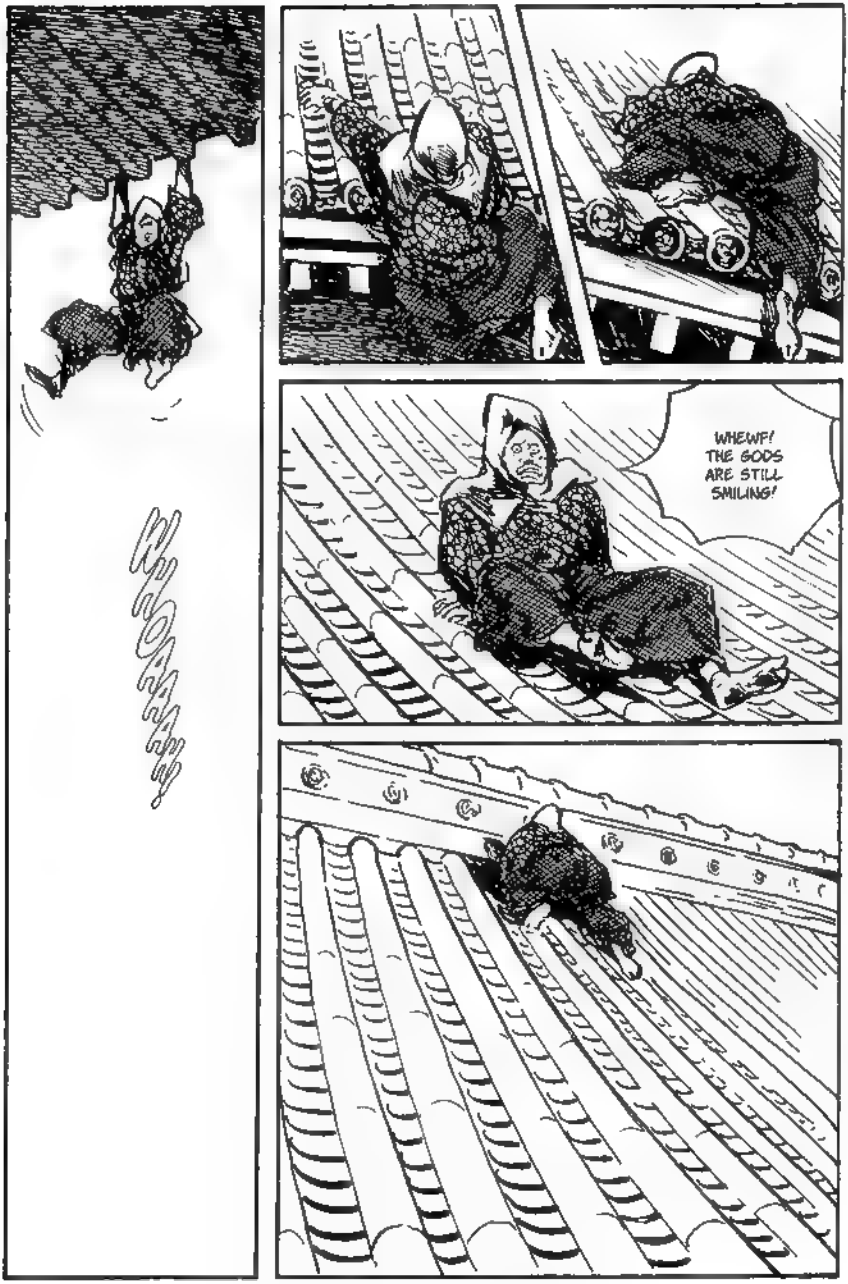


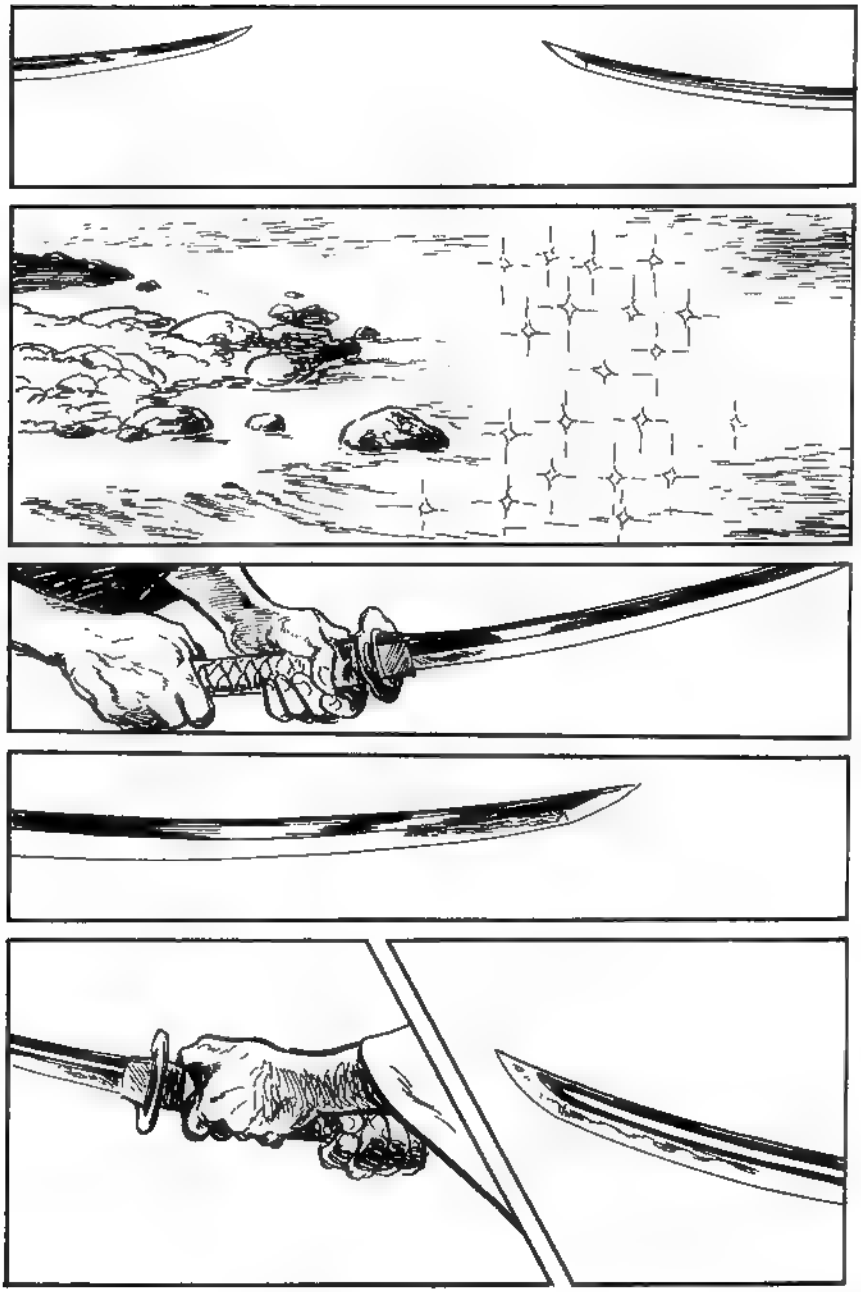

BWEH HEH HEH!
THERE THEY GO... THERE THEY GO!

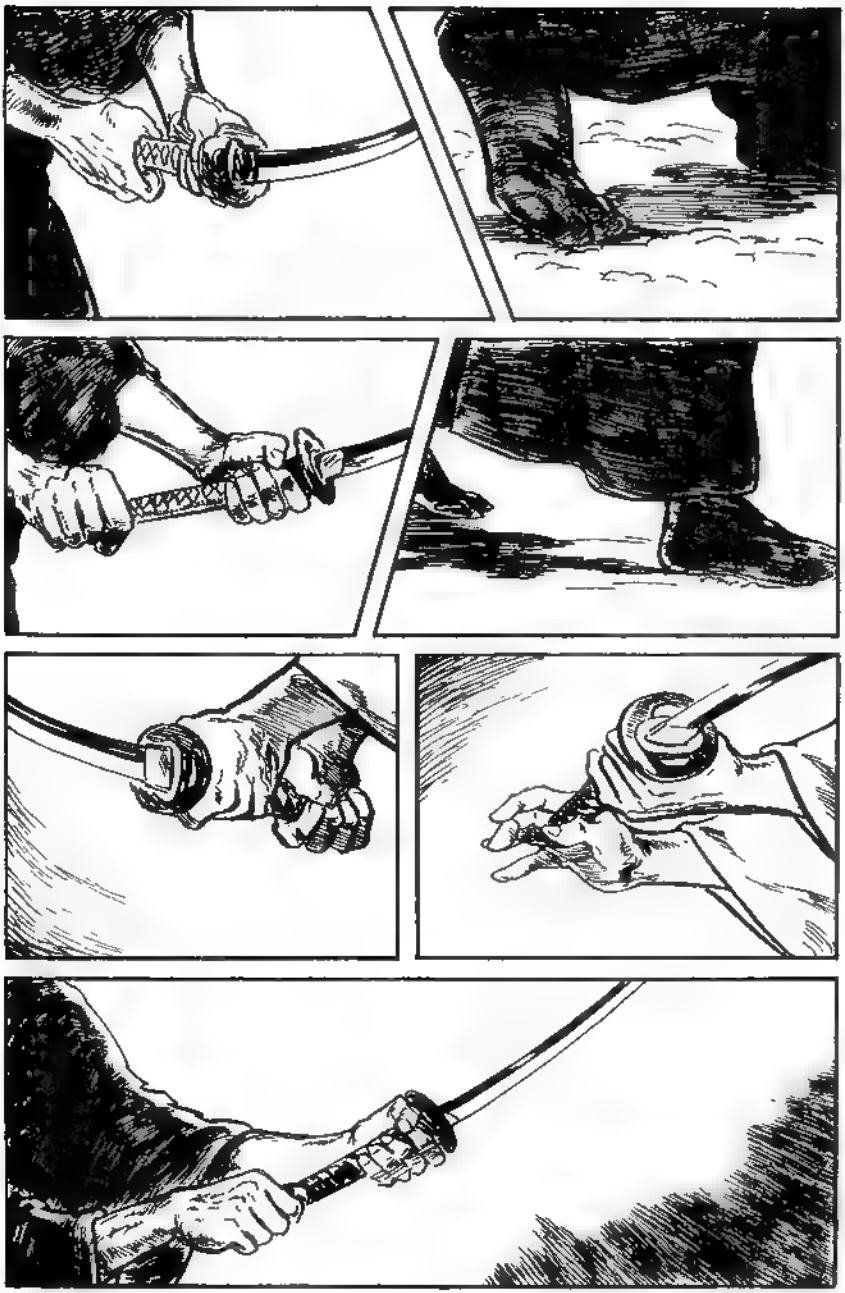

THE FIGHT OF THE CENTURY!

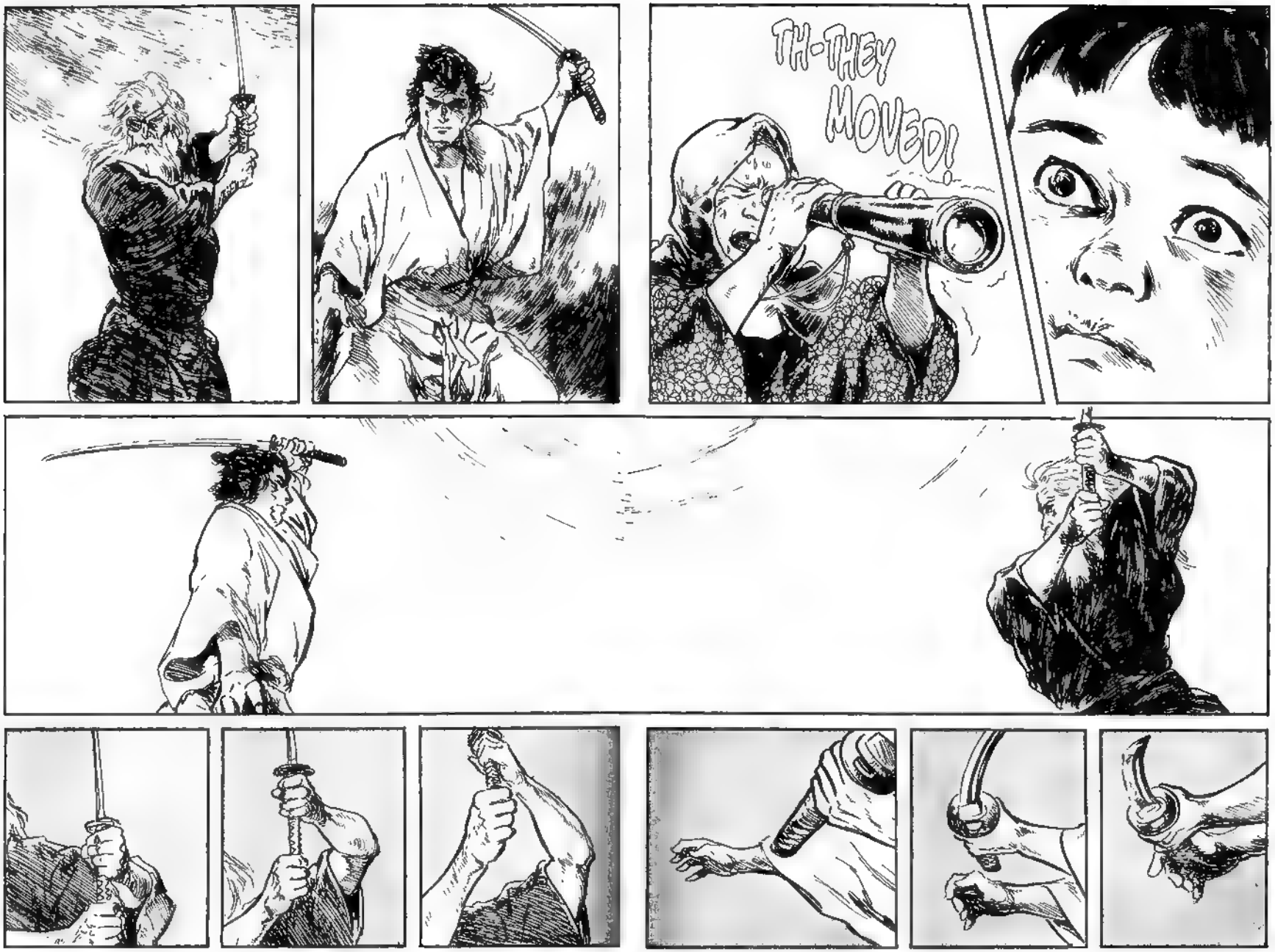
AND ME WITH THE BEST SEAT ON THE HOUSE!
BWEH HEH HEH!
AND SO. . WHO DO I CHEER FOR?
HEH, HEH.
DIE! DIE! RE-TSU-DŌ!
DIE! DIE! I-TTŌ!
DIE! DIE! ITTŌ!
DIE! DIE! RETSUDŌ!
HEH HEH! I LOVE YOU BOTH.

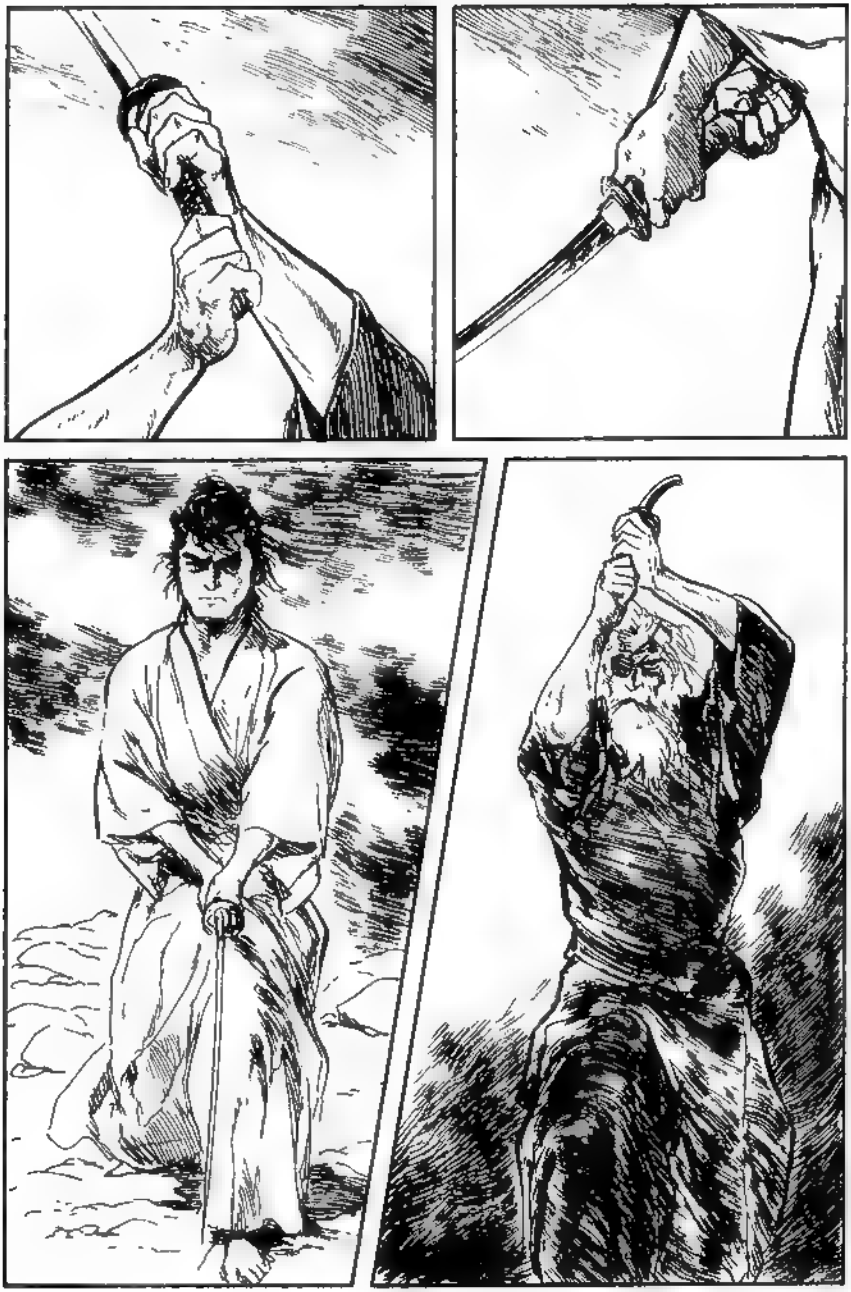
DIE!
DIE! RETSU-
DOWAA!
WHOA!!
YAIEE!


WHEWF! THE GODS ARE STILL SMILING!





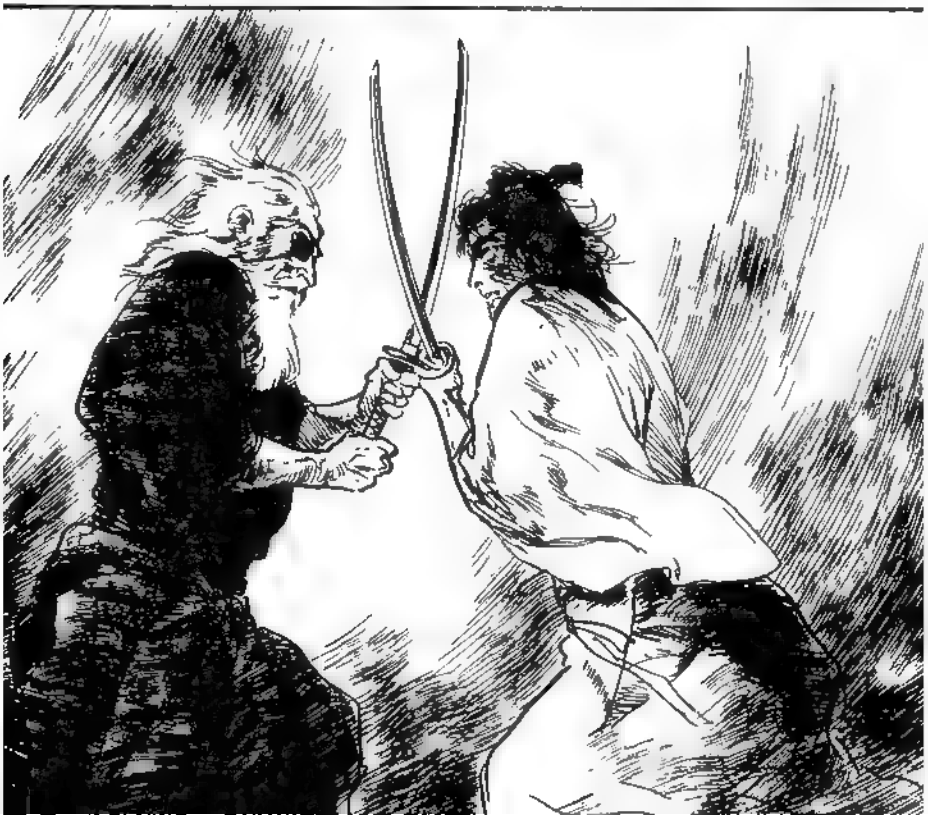

TH-THEY MOVED!

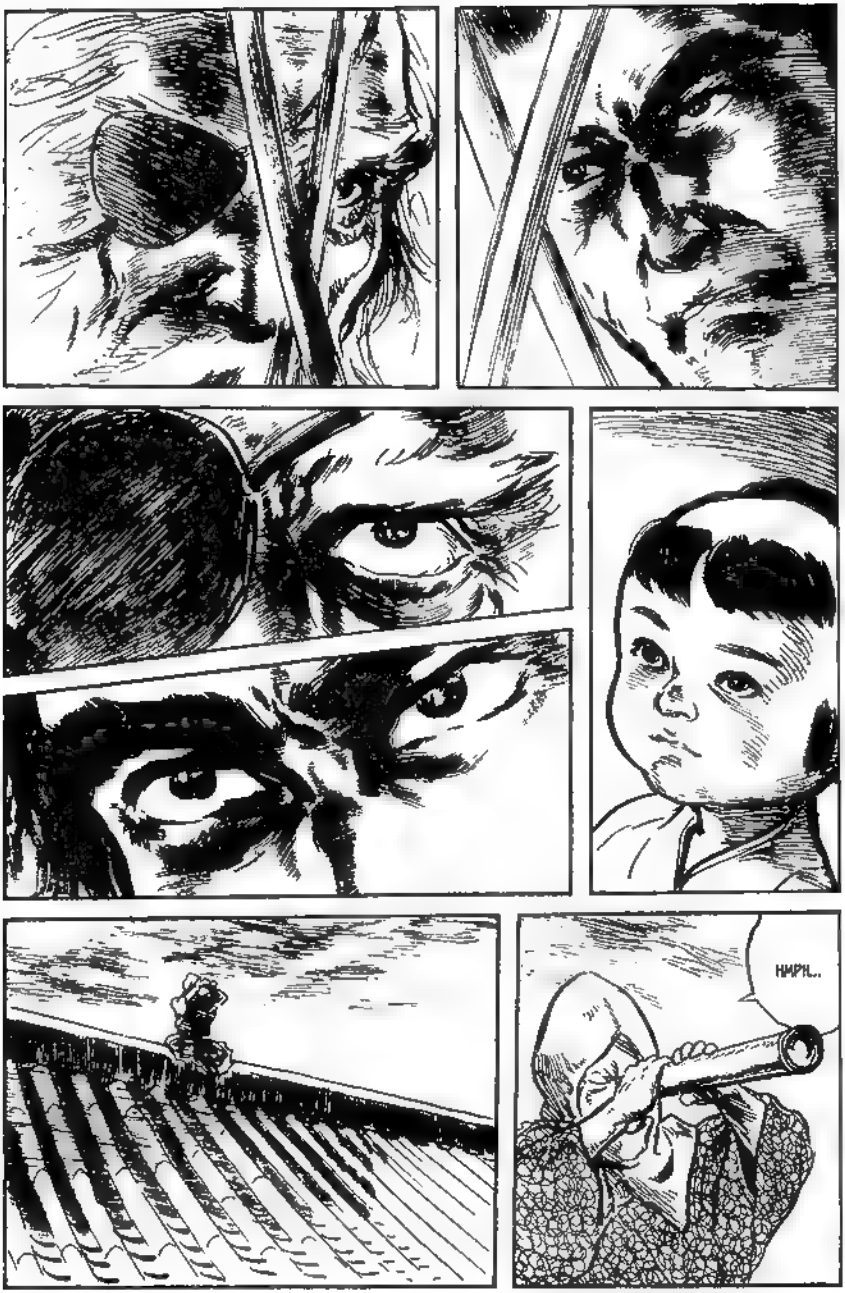


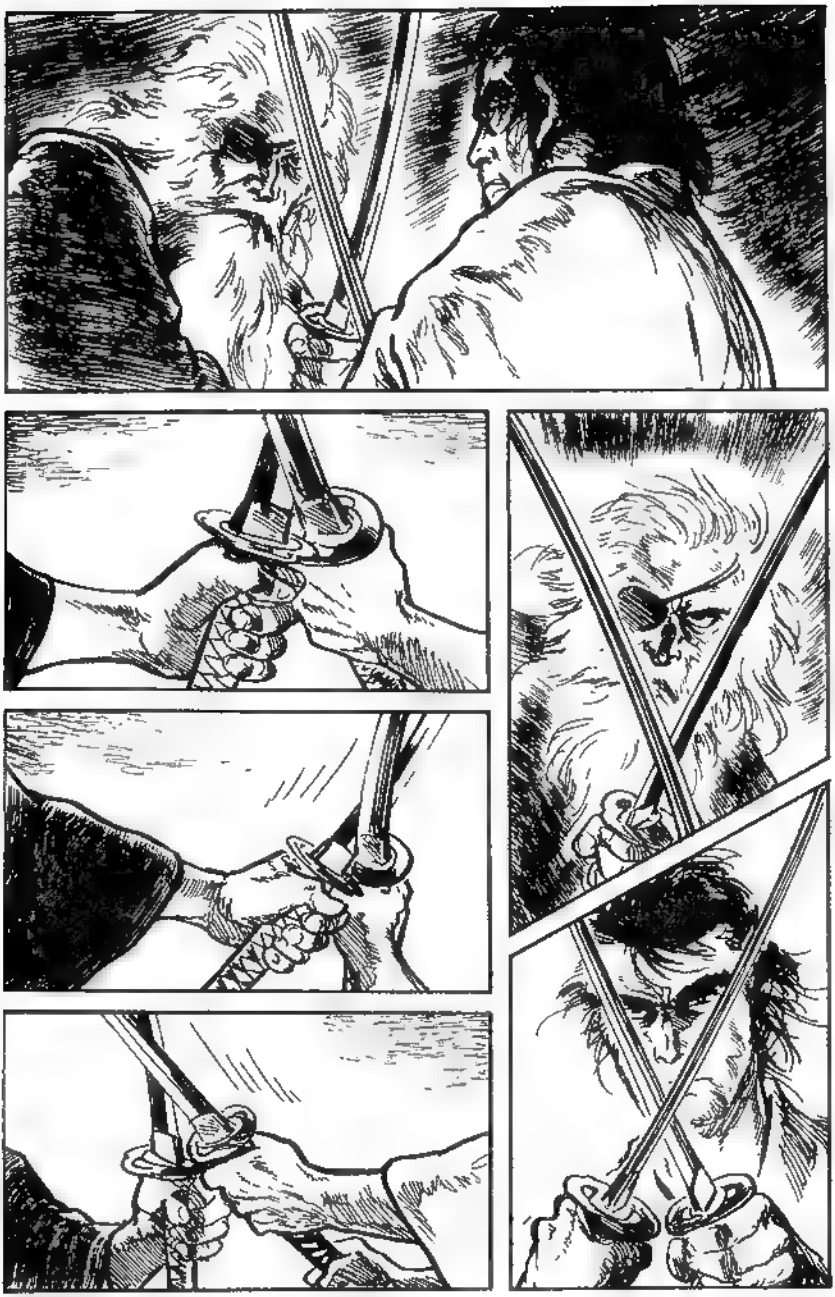
HYAAH!
SKSH

HAH?!

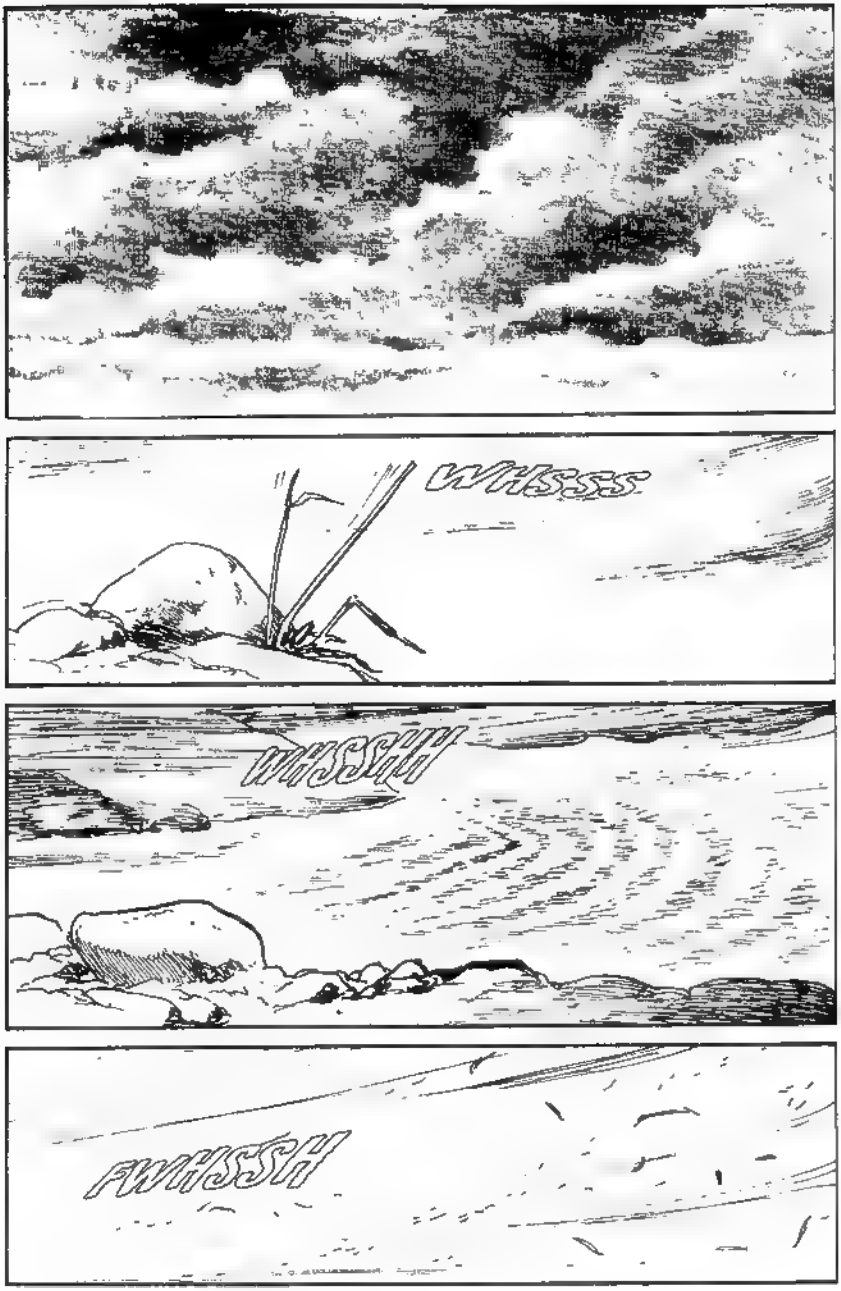
SHANG



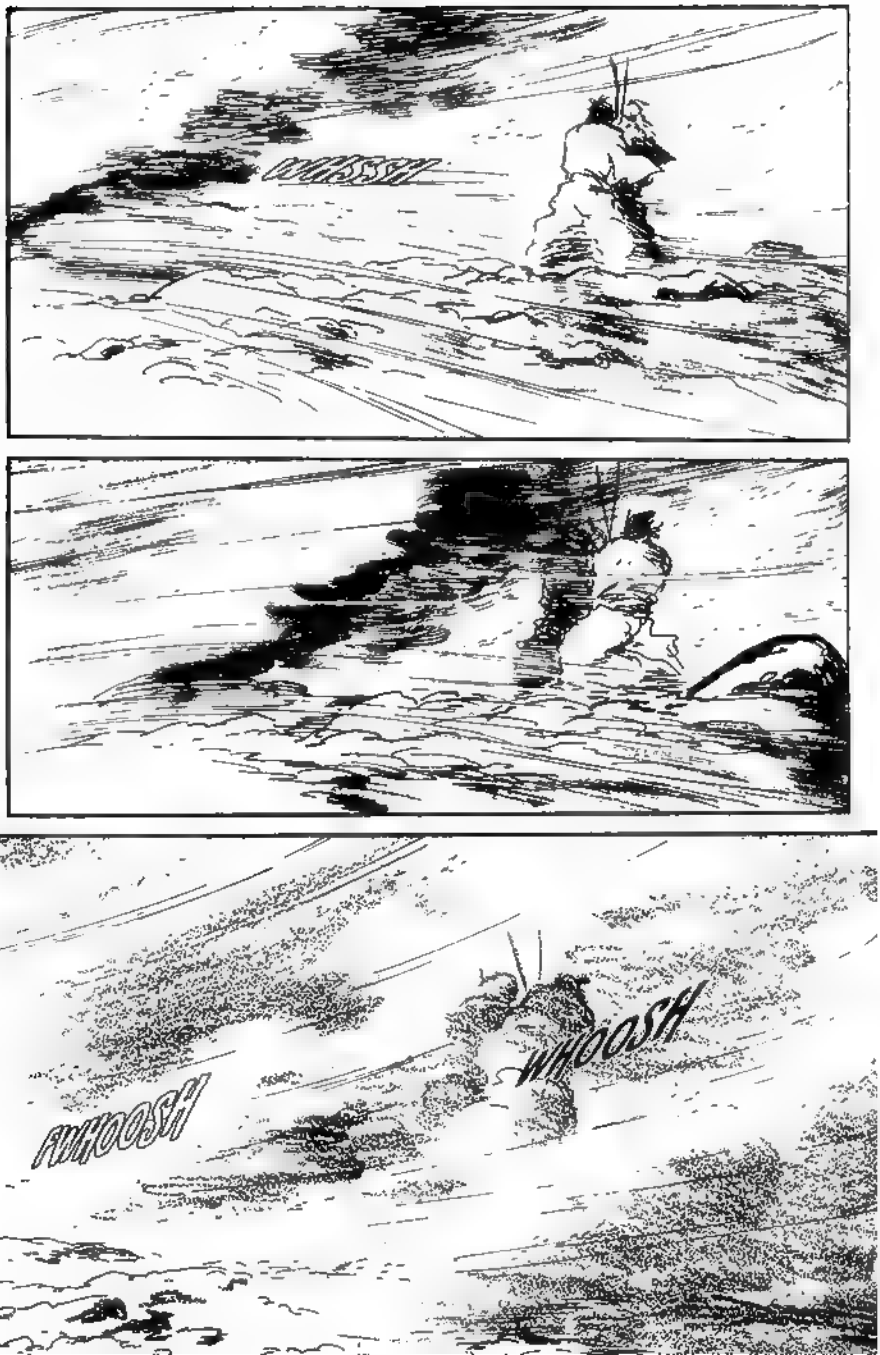

HMPH...



SKSSH
SKSH
KSSH


WHSSSS
WHSSSH
FWHSSH

FWHSSSSH


WHOOSH
WHOOSH
WHOOSH

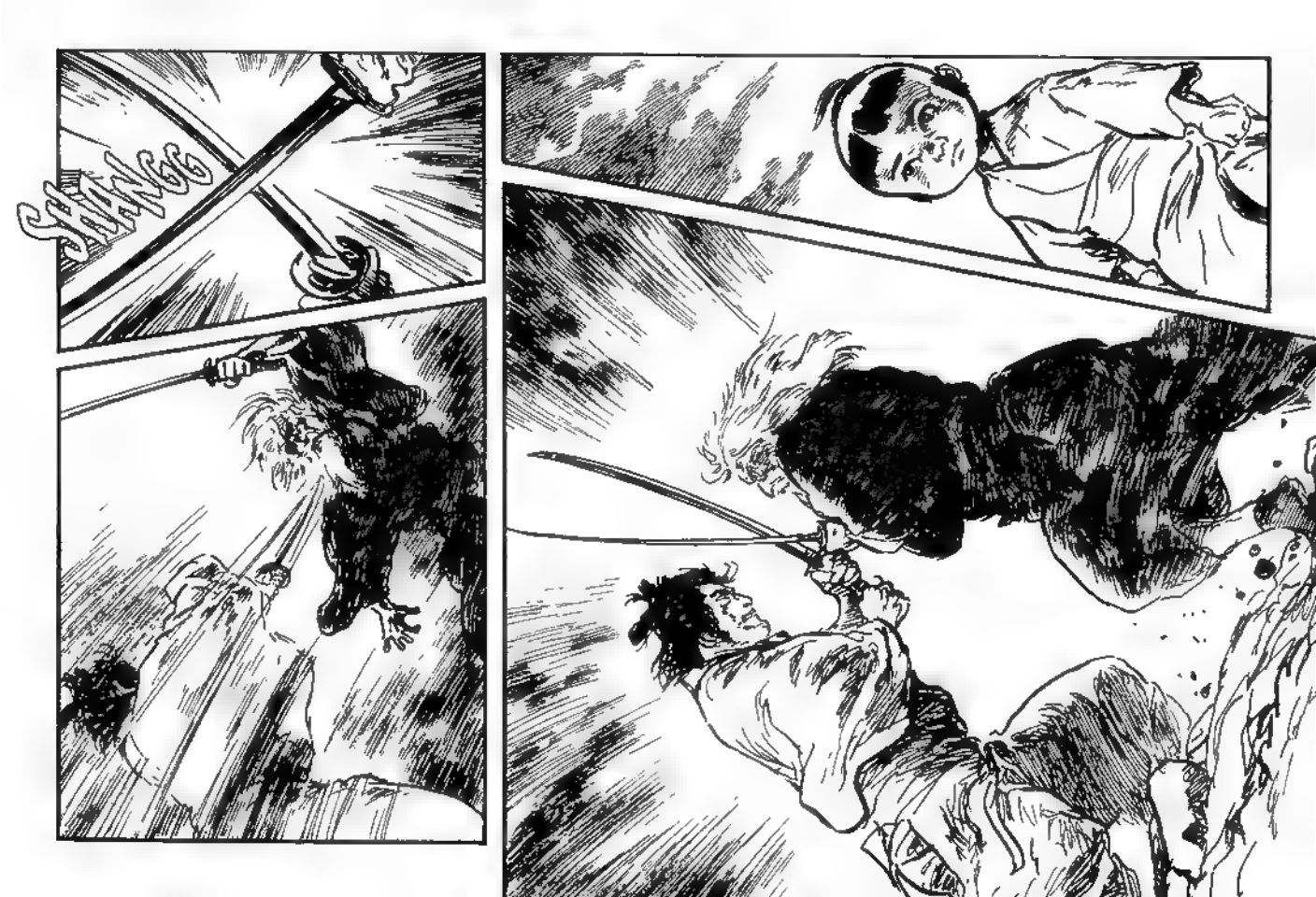
SHI'NN'G!

KANG
YAGYŪ
RIGHT SWEEP
STROKE!

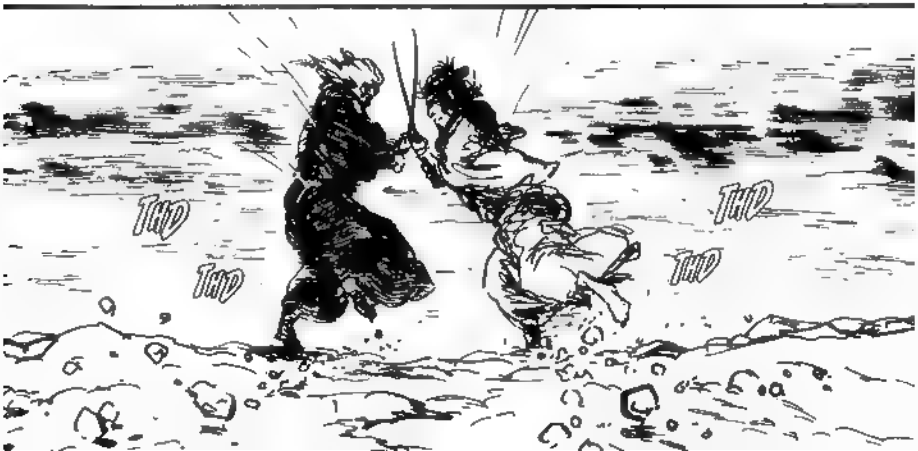
WHIFF
WHP

YAGYŪ LEFT SWITCH STROKE!
SKK-CH
KANGG
WHSSSSY

SUIIÖ-RYÜ
ZANBATÖ!
WHOO


SHING

SKSSH
SKTCH


THD
THD
THD
THD

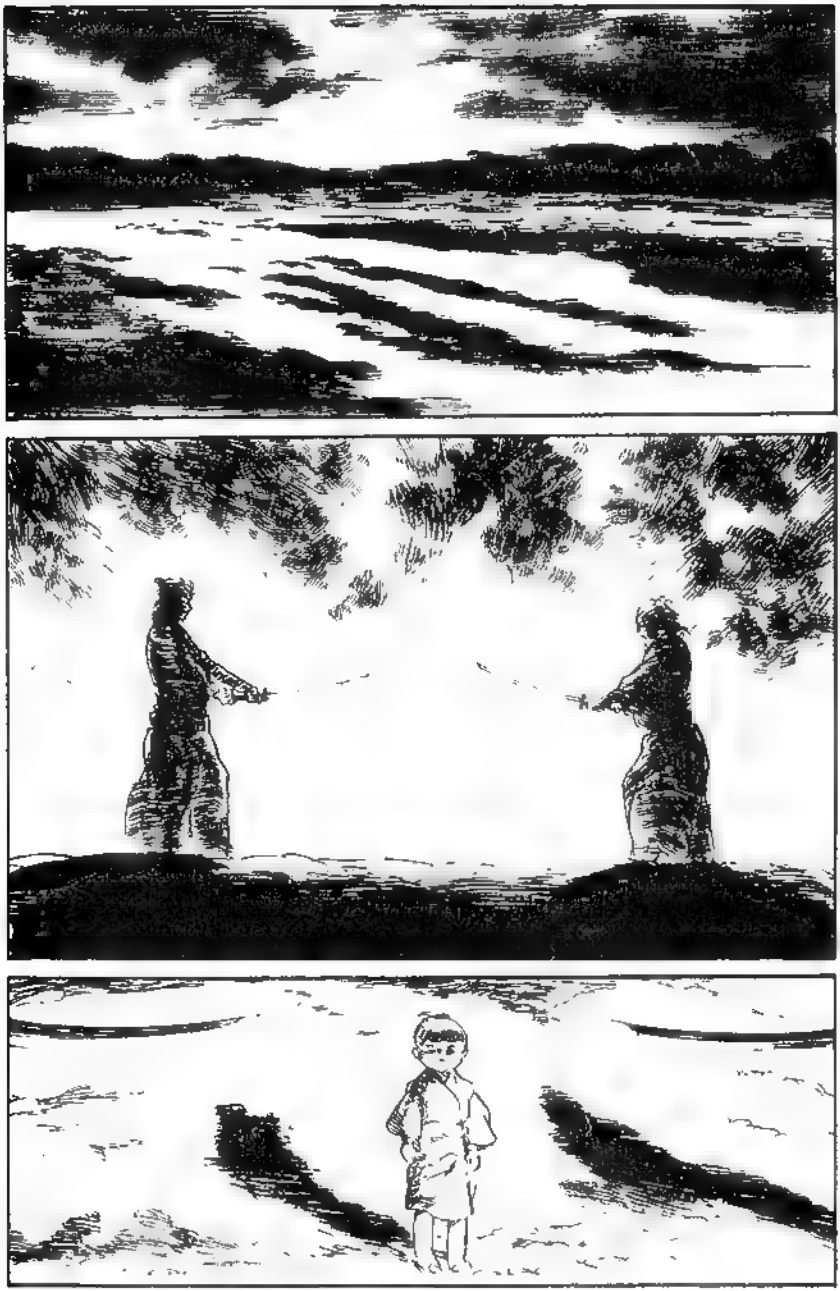
SPISSH

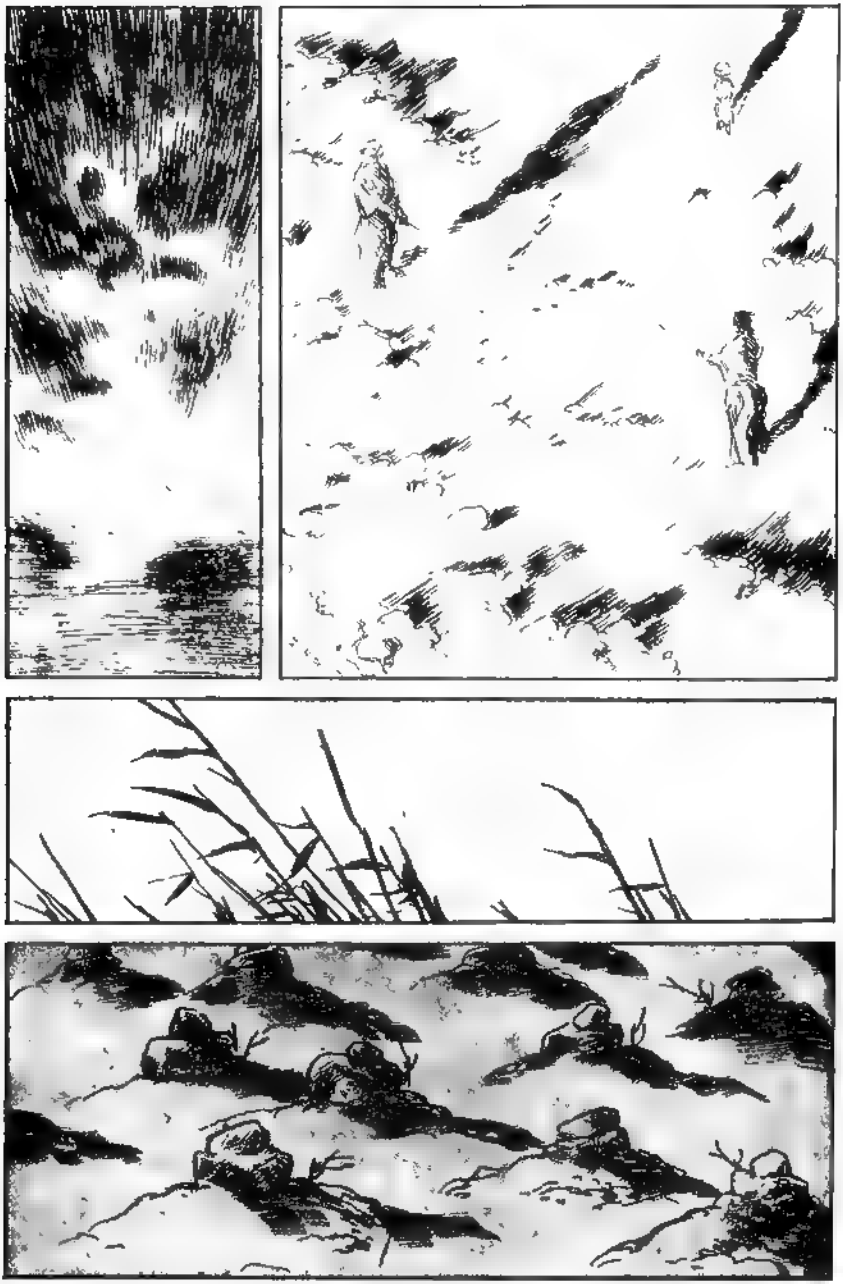
SUIŌ
WAVE-SLICING
STROKE?!

HRNG!

WHOOSH

FWP
IF YOU'D DRAWN ME IN DEEPER, YOU MIGHT HAVE TAKEN ME.
RETURN TO THE LAND.
...AND FIGHT!





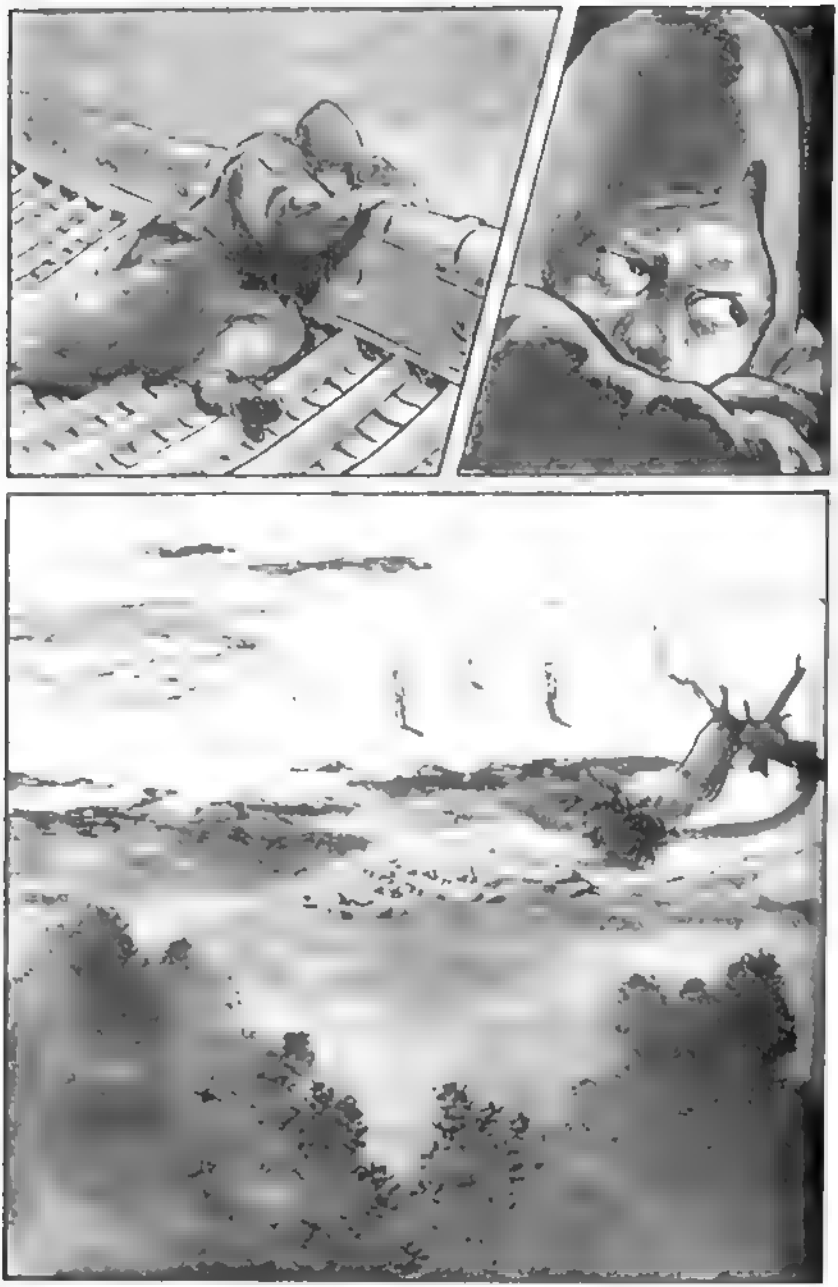
PSSH

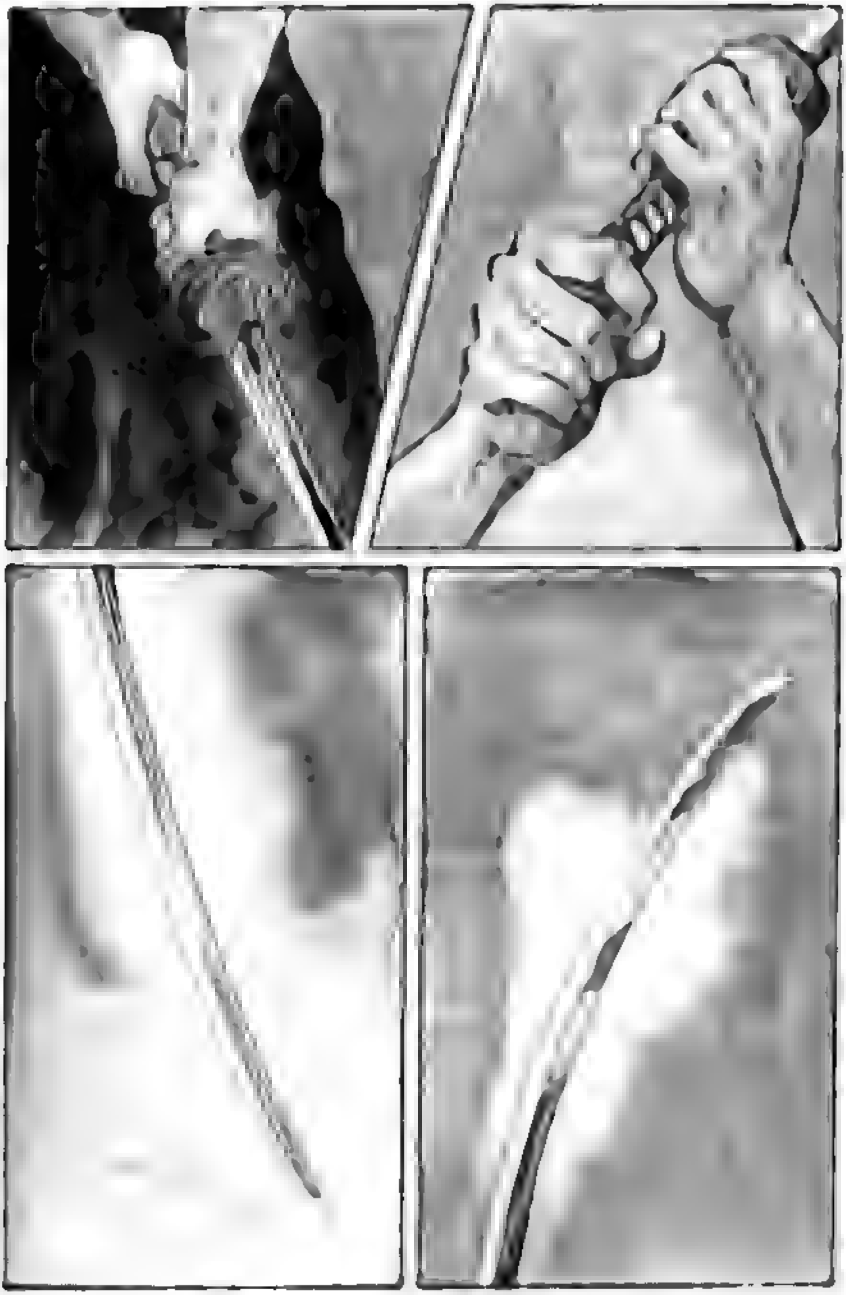
HEAVY
THE
SWORD..

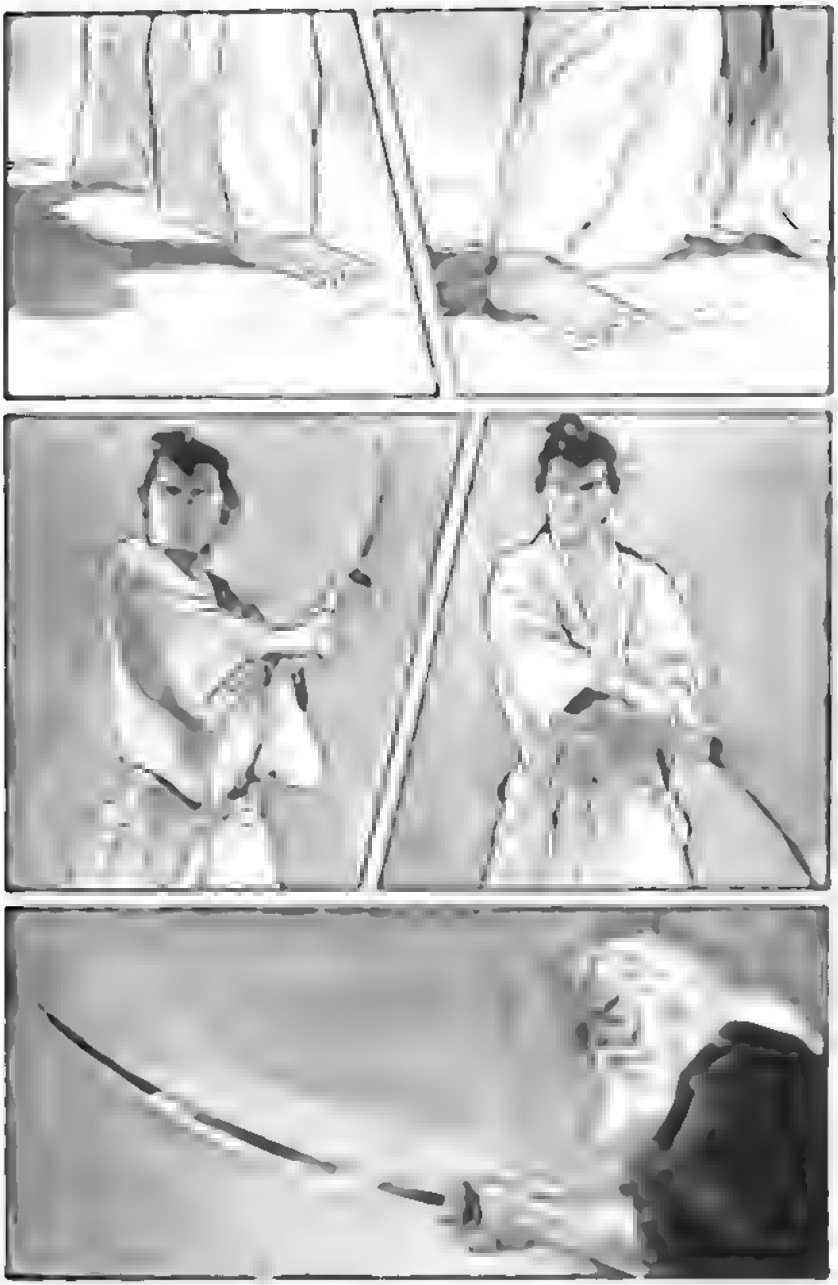
TFT
The Furry Triangles
We Love Beavers.

the hundred and fifteenth

Death in the Moon-light





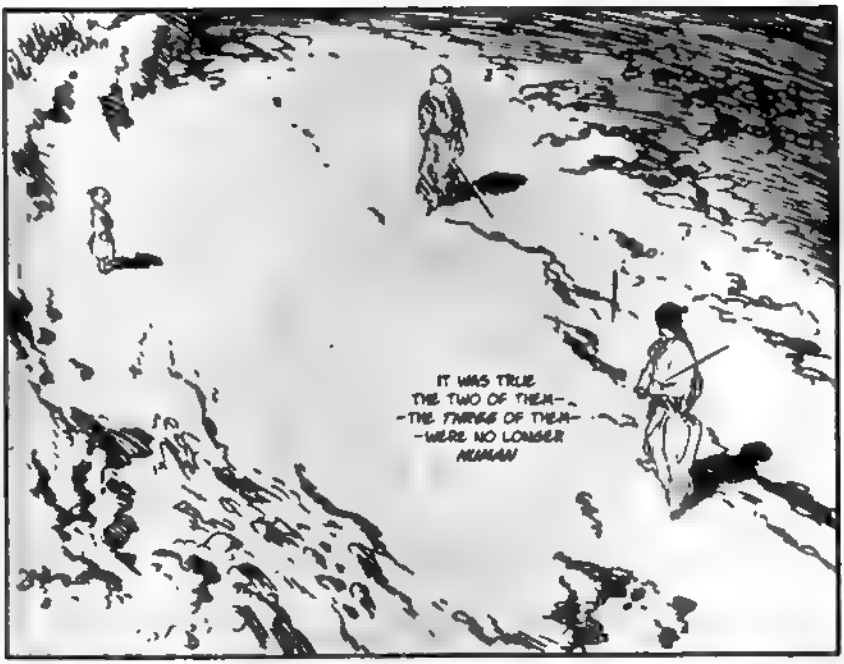


GOD, I'M HUNGRY...
THROAT'S LIKE...DUST.
BUT MOST OF ALL..
..I'M SO TIRED
THEY STARTED AT NOON. AND NOW EARLY EVENING, AT LEAST
ON AND ON .EIGHT HOURS...

MONSTERS? DEVILS? DEMONS. DRAGONS?
OH, RIGHT— WOLF AND TIGER.
WHATEVER. THEY'RE NOT HUMAN...
THAT'S FOR SURE.
HE EVEN GOT CUT, AND YET
DAMN! THE SWORD POINT? NO POISON!

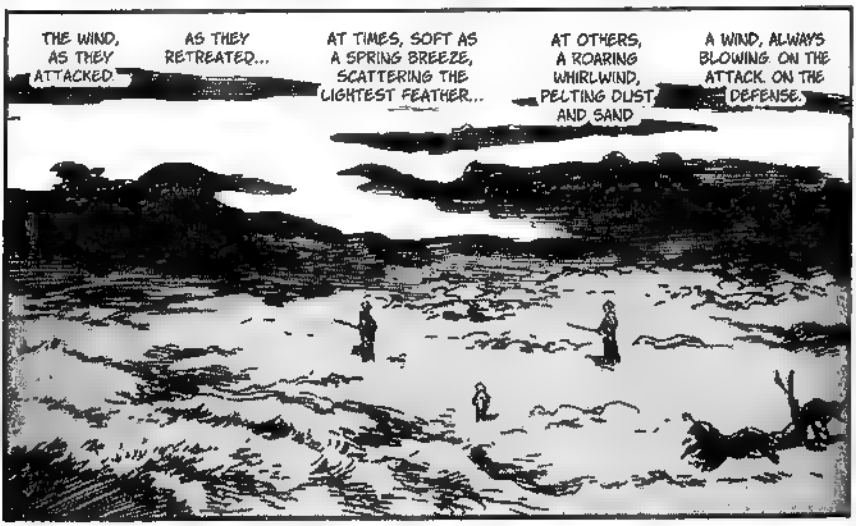
SCREWED UP AGAIN...I MEANT TO COAT THE WHOLE BLADE!
I SHOULD'VE PULLED THEM OUT!
HOW COULD I FORGET THE PART IN THE DIRTY!
RRNG! HOW AGGRAVATING!
CHOP WITH THE POISONED PART, DAMN IT!
CHOP, CHOP!
PATIENCE, ABE, PATIENCE. THEY CAN'T KEEP IT UP FOREVER. ONE WINS, AND BOTH DIE

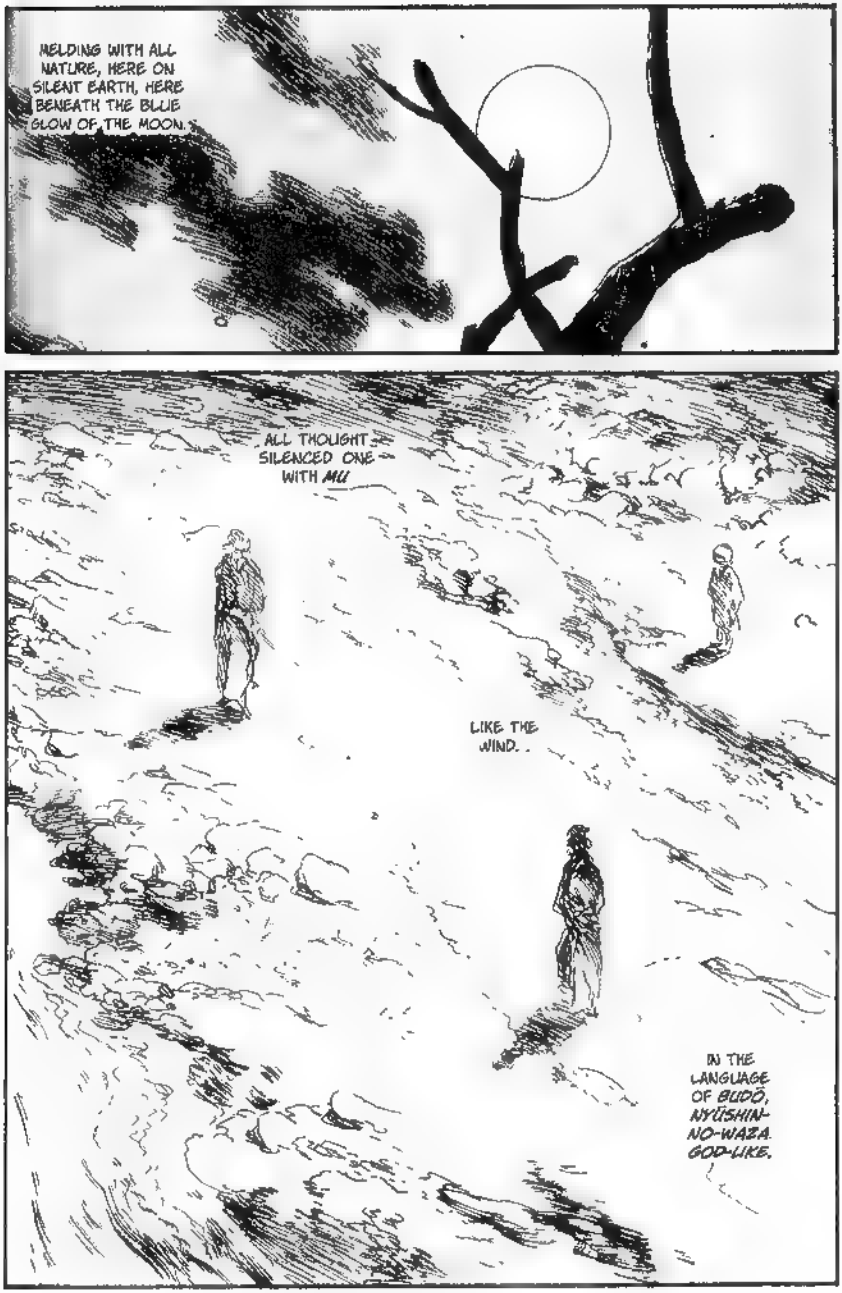
RELAX. CALM DOWN.
TAKE A LEAK...
...AND WAIT.
DAMN... THE BRAT'S AMAZING.
DOESN'T TWITCH. DOESN'T PEE. JUST STANDS THERE.
WEIRD. THEY'RE ALL TOO WEIRD..
AHHHH
SO SLEEPY...
.. SO COLD...

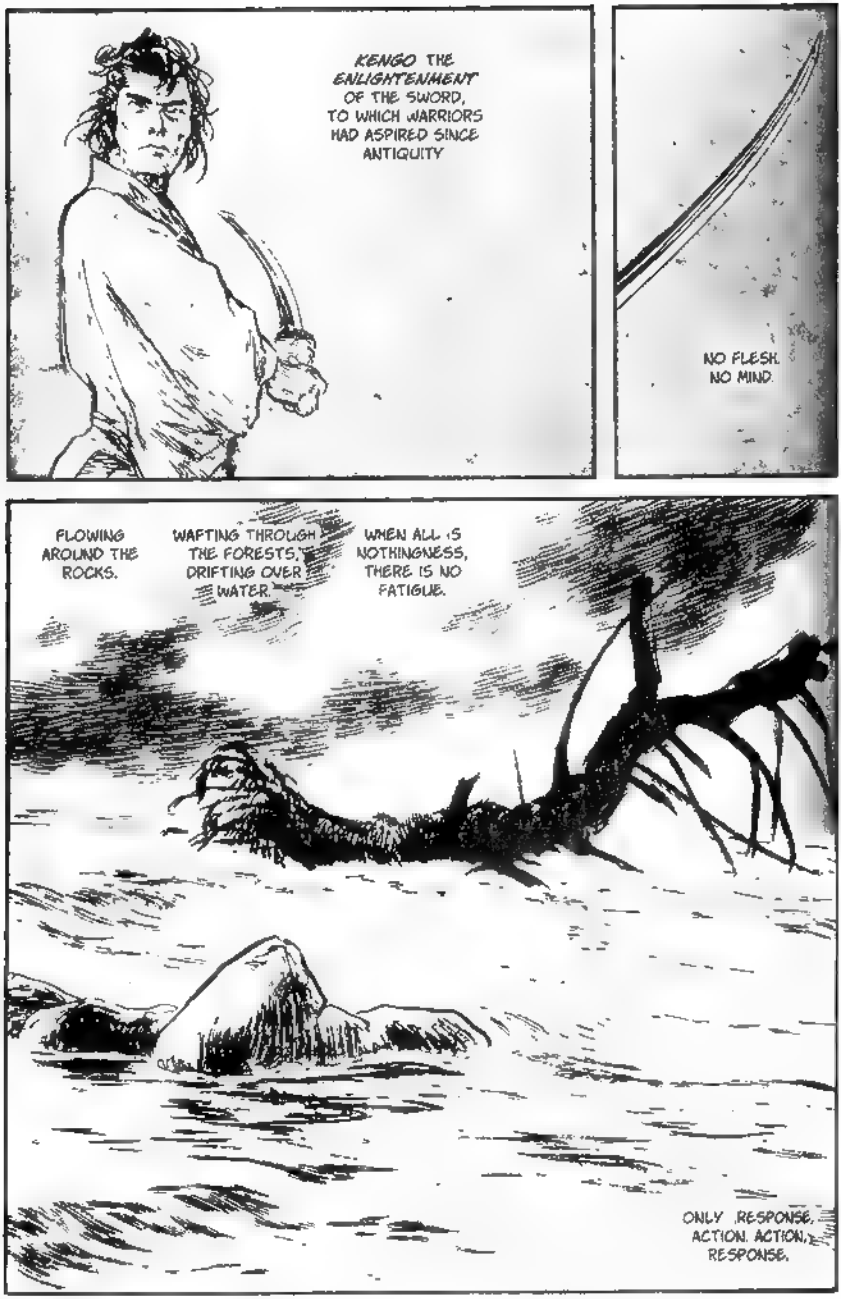

IT WAS TRUE
THE TWO OF THEM--
-THE THREE OF THEM-
-WERE NO LONGER
HUMAN

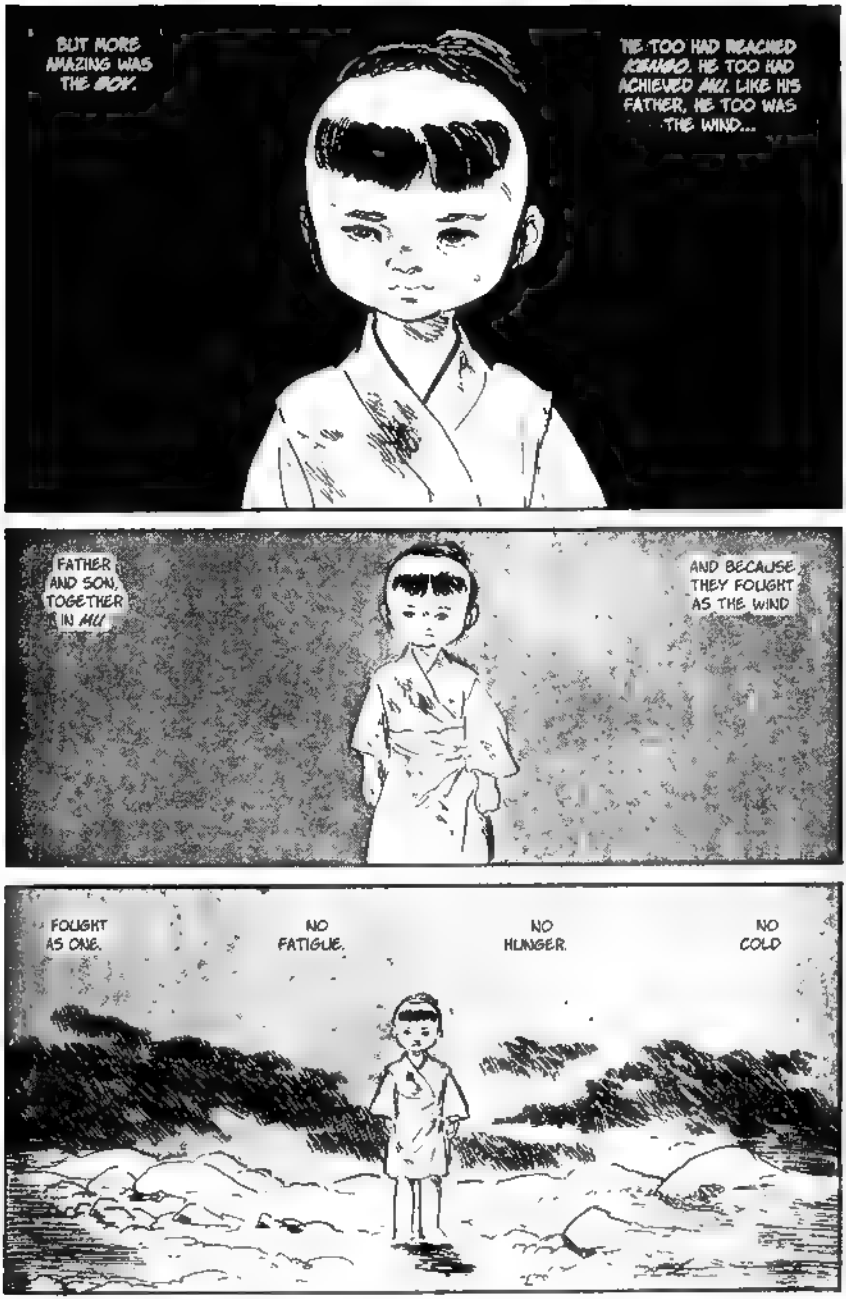
IF THEY WERE
HUMAN, THEY
WOULD HAVE
EXHAUSTED
STRENGTH AND
WILL.
WOULD HAVE
FALLEN THERE
BENEATH THE
MOON.

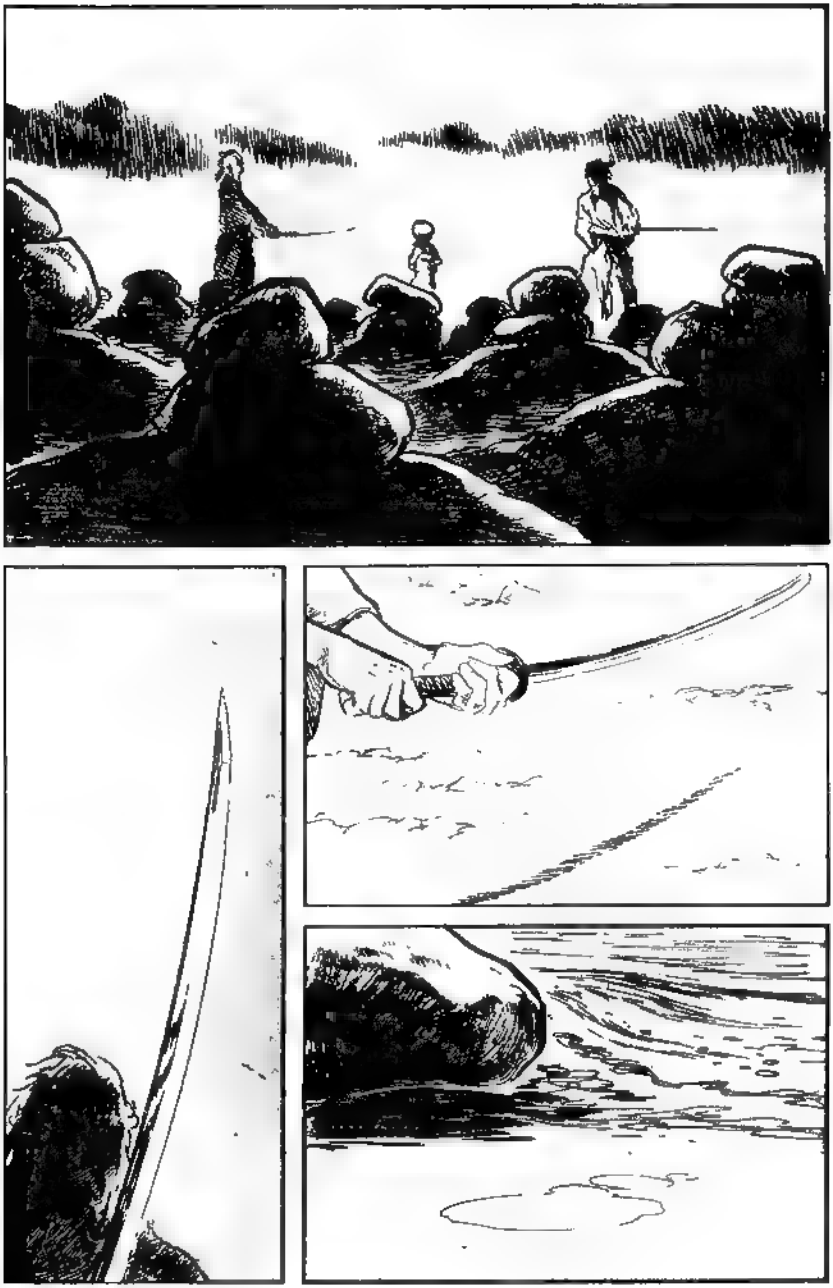
BUT IF NOT HUMAN, THEN WHAT?
TRULY
THEY WERE THE WIND
WIND


THE WIND, AS THEY ATTACKED
AS THEY RETREATED...
AT TIMES, SOFT AS A SPRING BREEZE, SCATTERING THE LIGHTEST FEATHER...
AT OTHERS, A ROARING WHIRLWIND, PELTING DUST AND SAND
A WIND, ALWAYS BLOWING. ON THE ATTACK. ON THE DEFENSE.


MELDING WITH ALL NATURE, HERE ON SILENT EARTH, HERE BENEATH THE BLUE GLOW OF THE MOON.
ALL THOUGHT = SILENCED ONE — WITH MU
LIKE THE WIND.
IN THE LANGUAGE OF BUDŌ, NYŪSHIN-NO-WAZA GOD-LIKE.

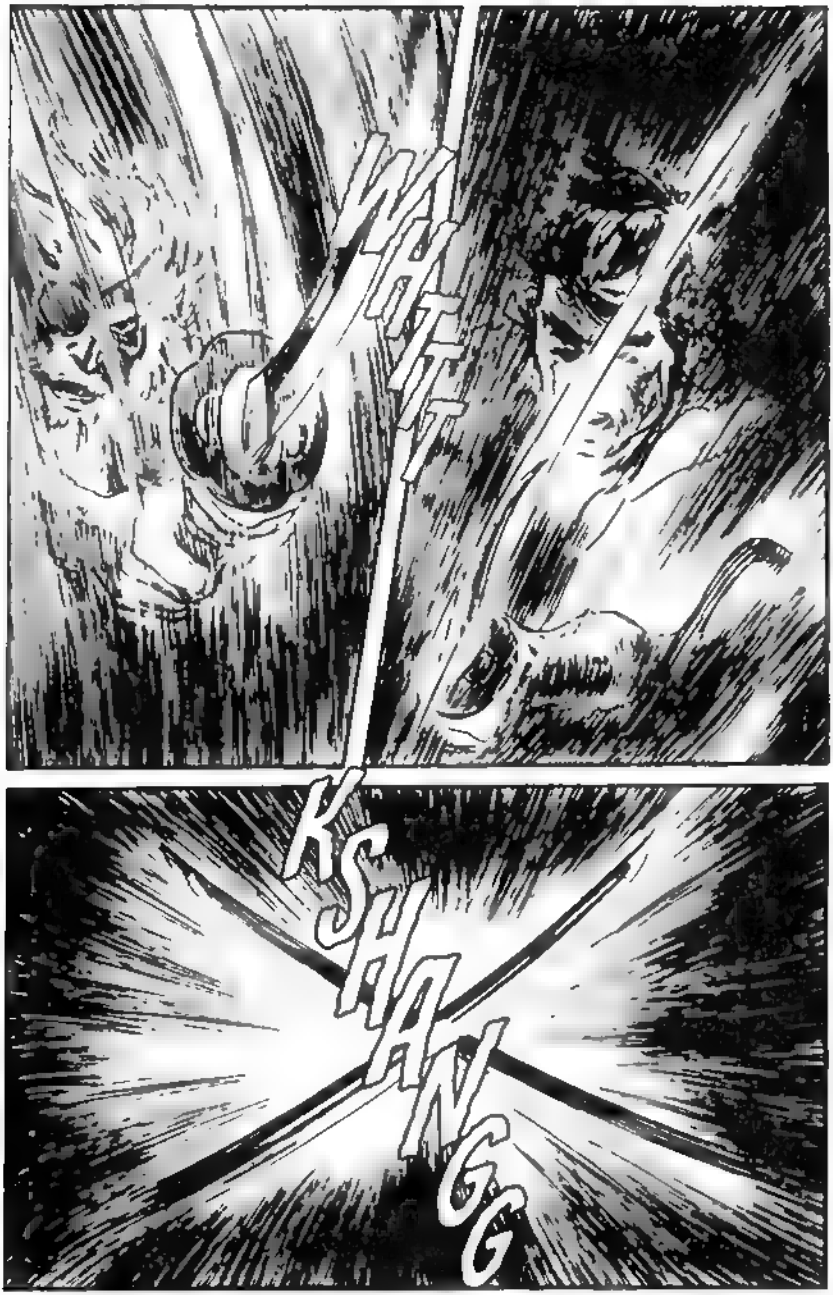

KENGO THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE SWORD, TO WHICH WARRIORS HAD ASPIRED SINCE ANTIQUITY
NO FLESH. NO MIND.
FLOWING AROUND THE ROCKS.
WAFTING THROUGH THE FORESTS, DRIFTING OVER WATER.
WHEN ALL IS NOTHINGNESS, THERE IS NO FATIGUE.
ONLY RESPONSE. ACTION. ACTION, RESPONSE.

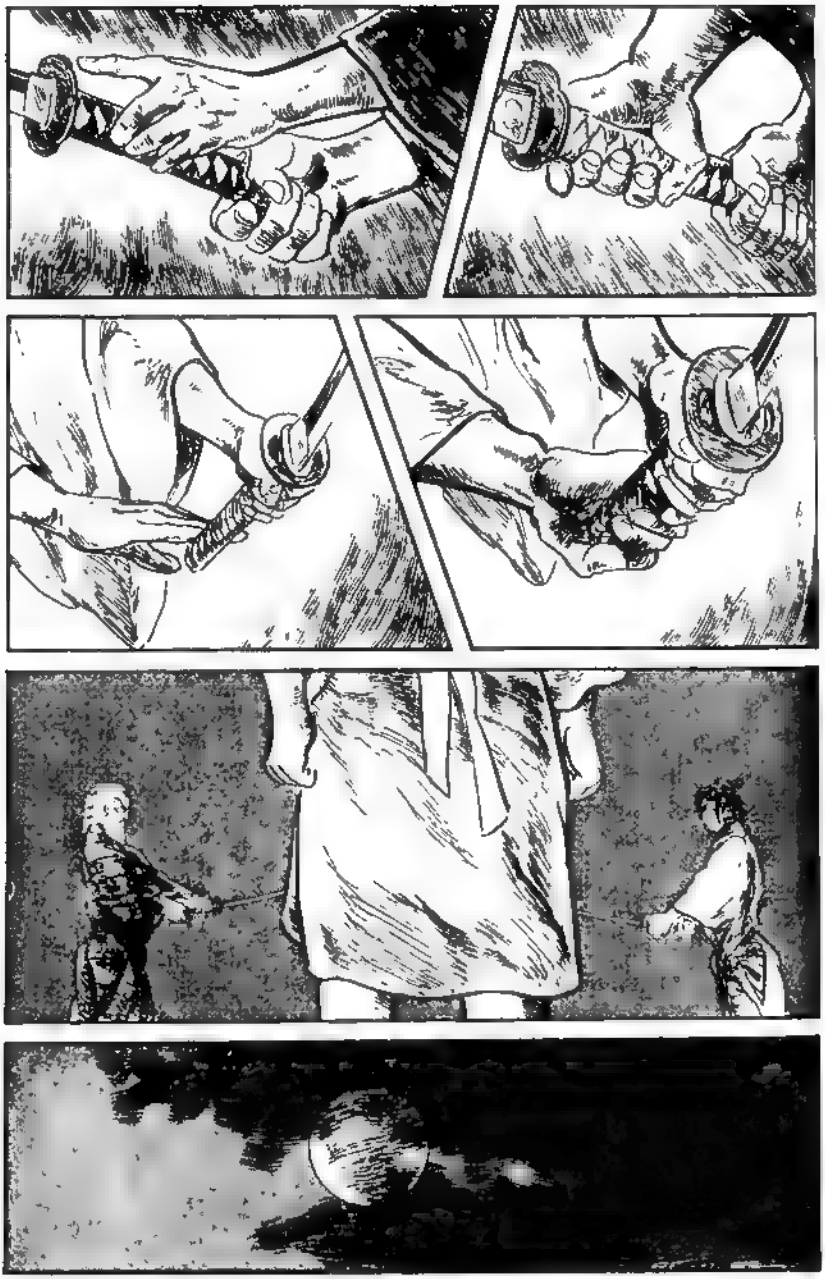

BUT MORE AMAZING WAS THE BOY.
HE TOO HAD REACHED KENDO. HE TOO HAD ACHIEVED MU. LIKE HIS FATHER, HE TOO WAS THE WIND...
FATHER AND SON, TOGETHER IN MU.
AND BECAUSE THEY FOUGHT AS THE WIND
FOUGHT AS ONE.
NO FATIGUE.
NO HUNGER.
NO COLD



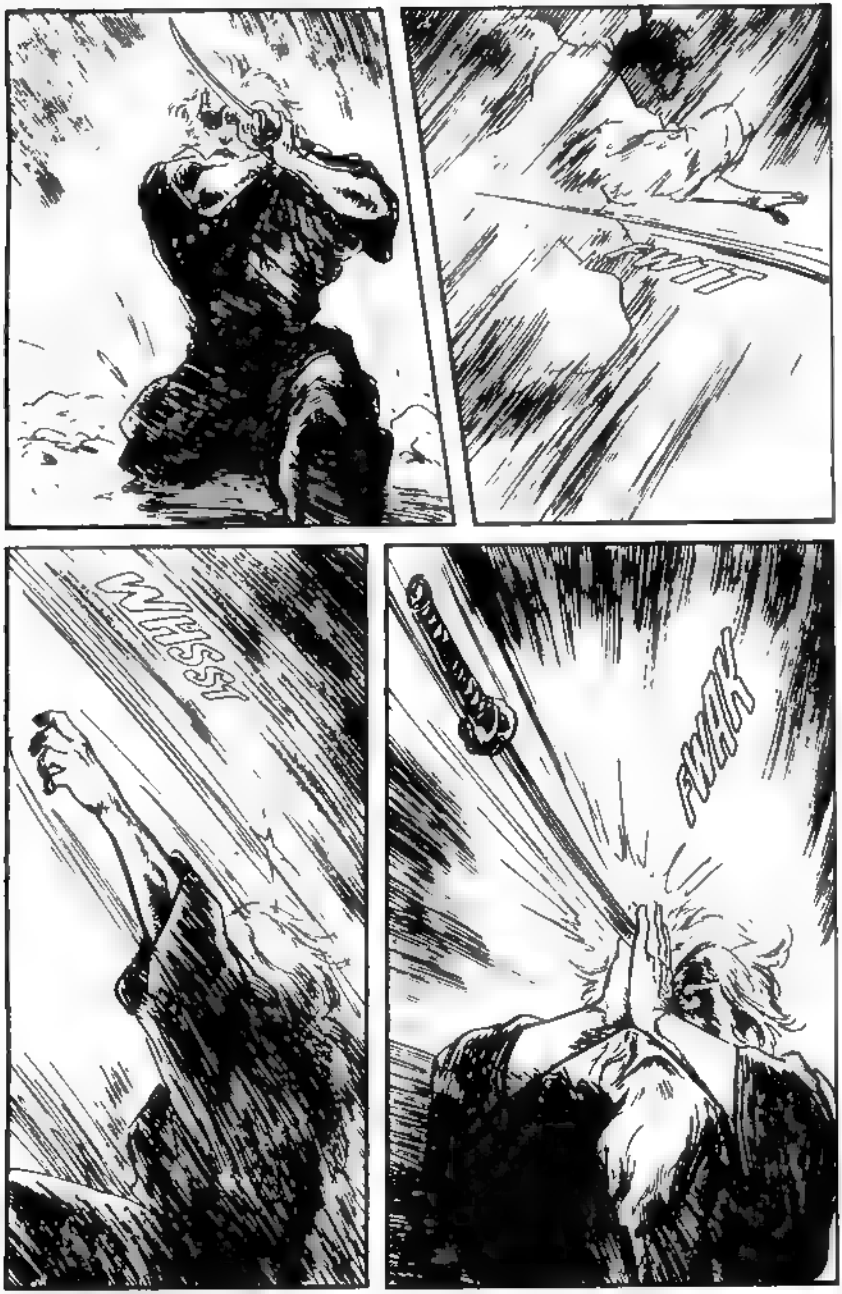
HYAHHH!
RYAH!
PRAA!

THD
THD
THD
THD
THD
THD


WHITT
KSHANGG



THWOP!


WHISH
AWAK

SNAK
THPP

HRMG!
YAGYŪ SWORD CAPTURE! BRILLIANT.
YOU AS WELL.

BLOOD STINGS...

MEET KYO...
EMPTINESS.

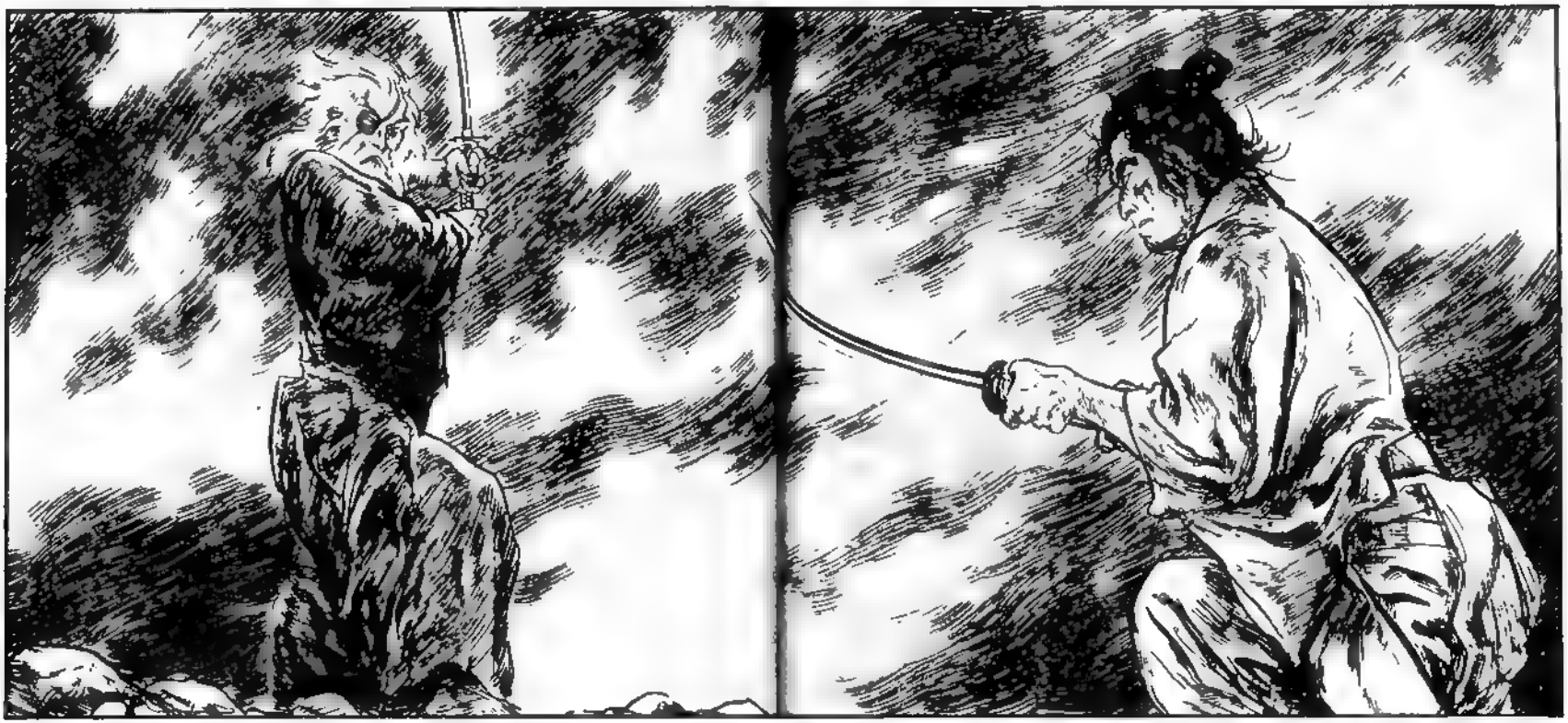
.. WITH EMPTINESS.
IF YOUR FOE STRIKES
INTO THAT EMPTINESS,
BECOME JITSU
BECOME REAL.

THE STANCE OF EMPTINESS CAN ONLY BE MET... WITH EMPTINESS. BOTH OPPONENTS. NEITHER MOVING NOR MOVED. NO *TEMPTATION*.

BUT THE REAL—
—DEMANDS THE
REAL.

RYAH!
HYAH!!
PAPAA!

SHRNNG

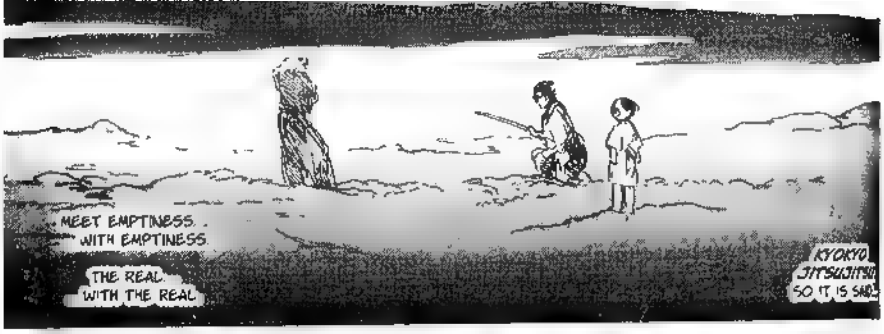


REALITY, STRIKING INTO EMPTINESS — WHEN UNEQUAL OPPONENTS BATTLE, THAT DECIDES THE VICTOR.

THE POWERFUL SEES THROUGH HIS OPPONENT'S EMPTINESS. FINDS THE OPENING.
BUT WHEN *BOTH* ARE EVENLY MATCHED...
...IT CANNOT BE.
NO OPENING TO BE FOUND FOR *EITHER*.

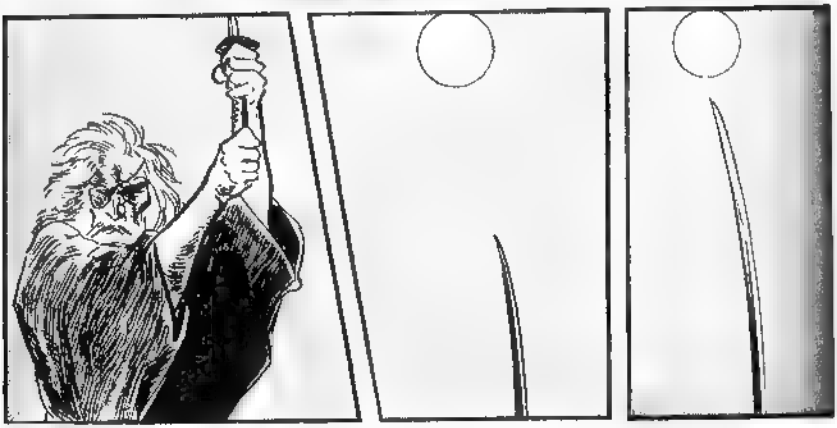
AND THUS, BOTH STRIKE THE STANCE OF EMPTINESS. WAIT *TEMPT*

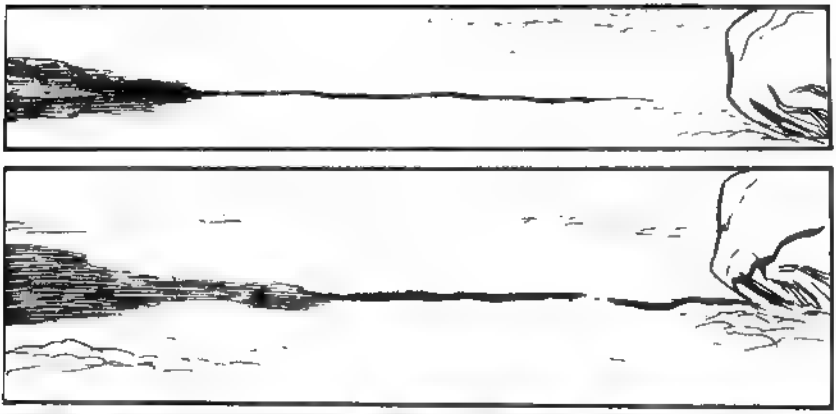
HE WHO IS *TEMPTED*... *DIES*.

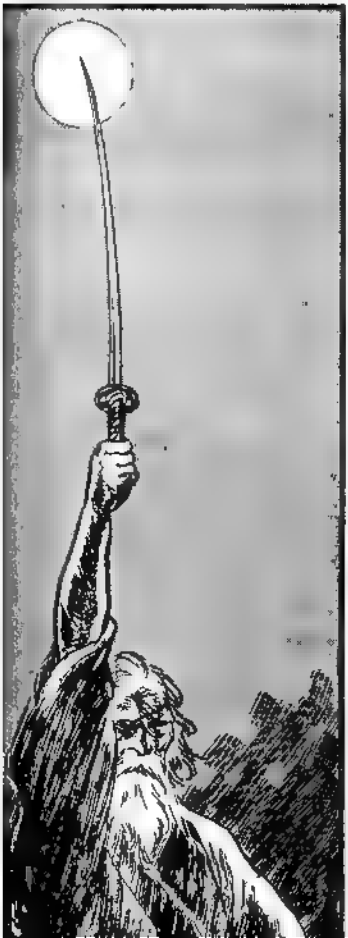

MEET EMPTINESS
WITH EMPTINESS.
THE REAL
WITH THE REAL.
KYOKYO
JITSUJITSU
SO IT IS SAID.

ITTŌ..
WHERE
IS THE
MOON?

DIRECTLY
OVER YOUR
HEAD.







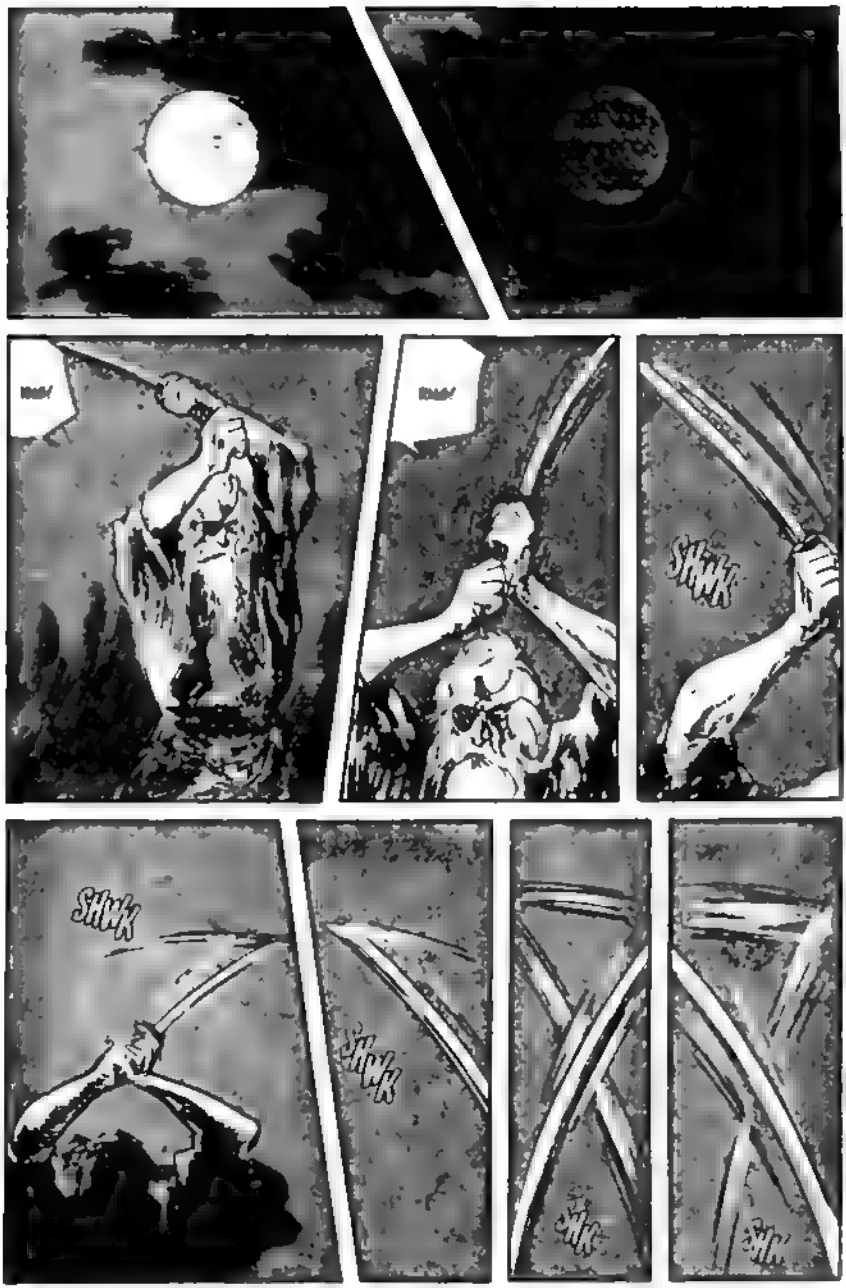
YAGYŪ MOON AND WATER!
MY SWORD SHADOW ON YOUR FACE...
YOU'RE IN MY MA-AI!
SKSHH
KWNG
ONCE YOU'RE WITHIN MY MA-AI, YOU CANNOT REACH ME.

TIPP
LIKE MOON ON WATER! SWORD AND SHADOW.
BUT HOW CAN YOU JUDGE DISTANCE?

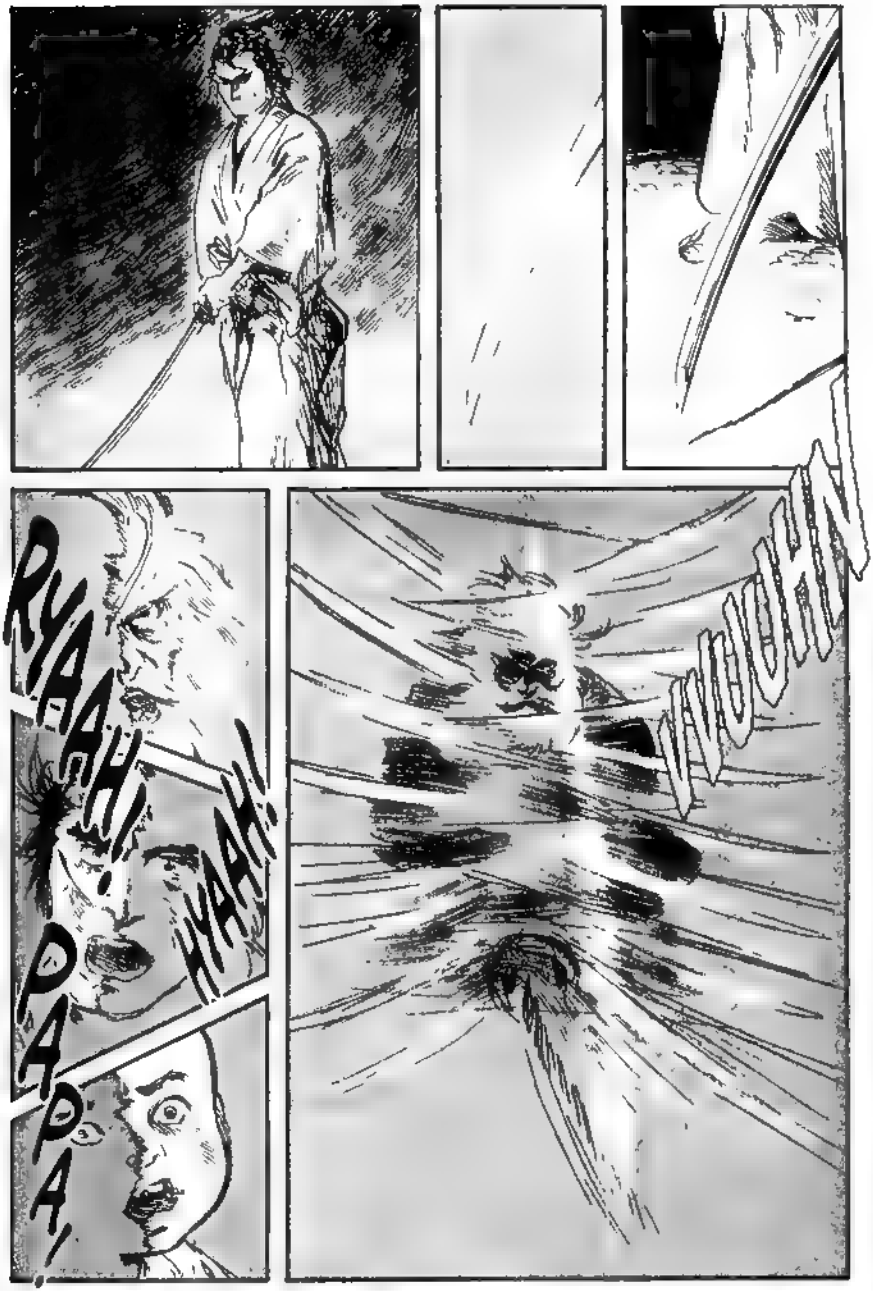
YOU CUT SKIN, AND I STRIKE TO BONE.
IT'S OVER, ITTŌ.
PAPAA!
HYAHH!
WHSSH

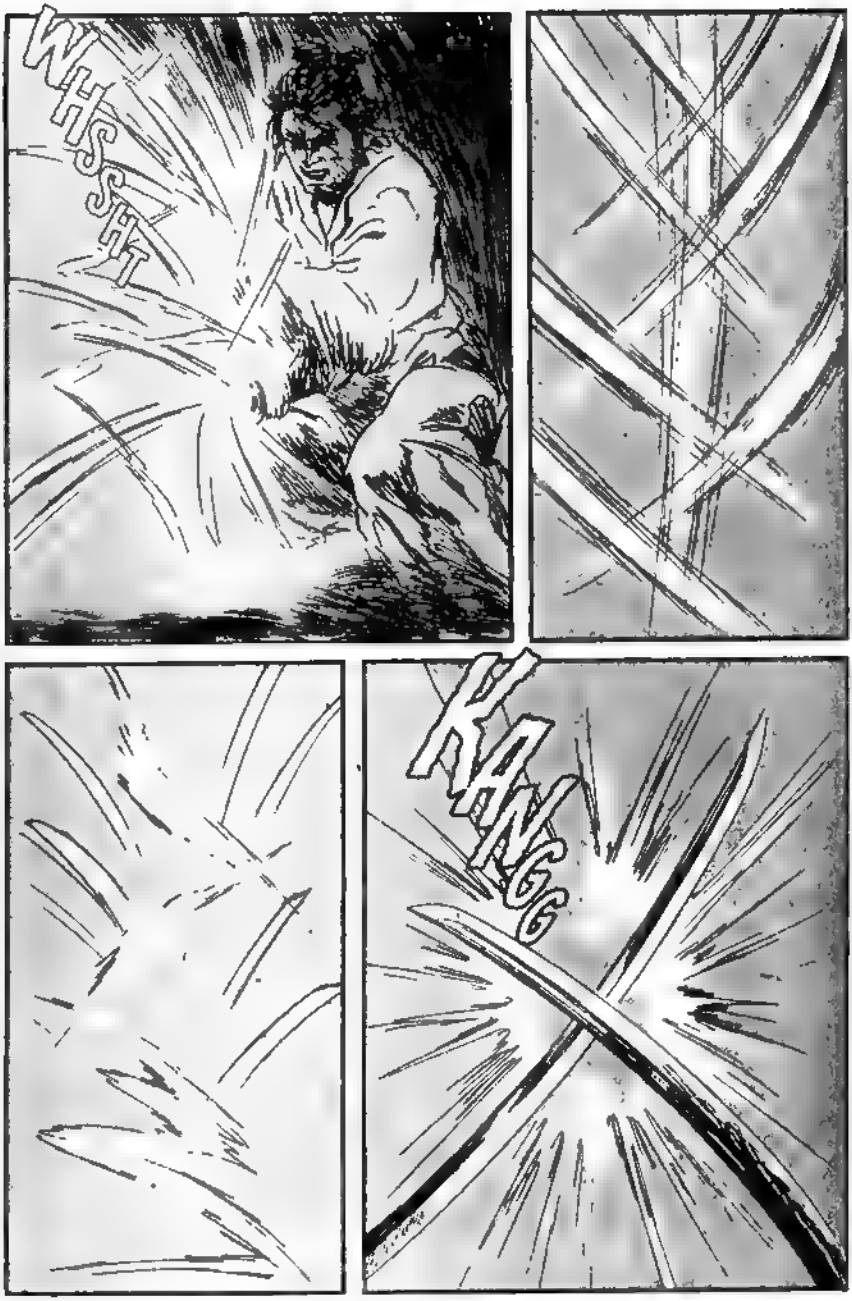
KOH!
YAGYŪ
MOON AND
WATER! NEVER
BEFORE—

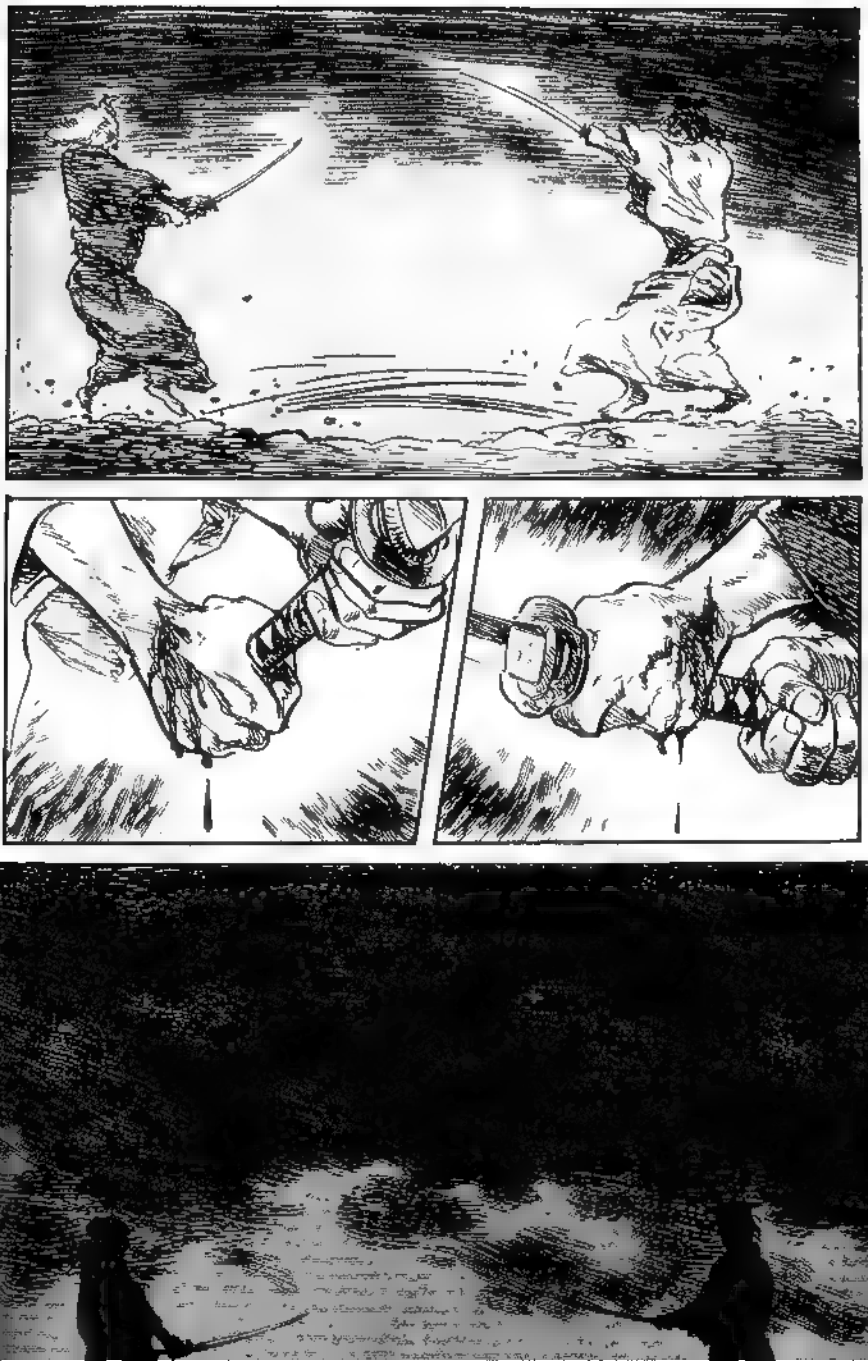
ŌGAMI ITTŌ, UNRIVALLED!
RIGHT SWEEP, MOON AND WATER. . ALL KNOWN. BUT NOT THE EIGHT FENCES.
I'LL BREAK IT TO BURY YOU..
SUIŌ WATERBIRD, STILL UNKNOWN.
I BEGIN.
YAGYŪ EIGHT FENCES!


SHWK
SHWK
SHWK
SHWK
SHWK
SHWK

SHK
SHK
SHK
MMG!
SHK
SHK
SHK
SHK
SHK
SHK


RYAAH!
HYAH!
PAPA!
VUOHN


WHSSH
KANGG

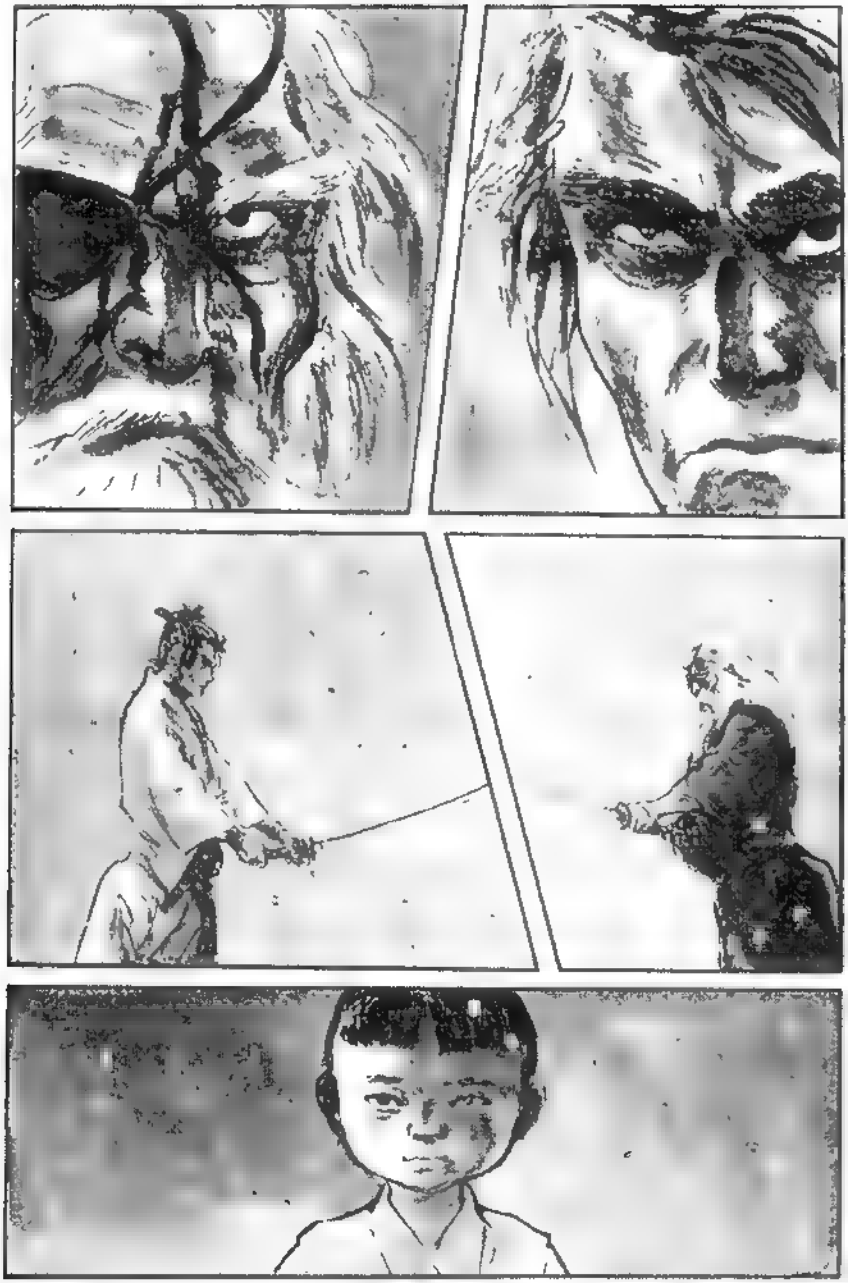


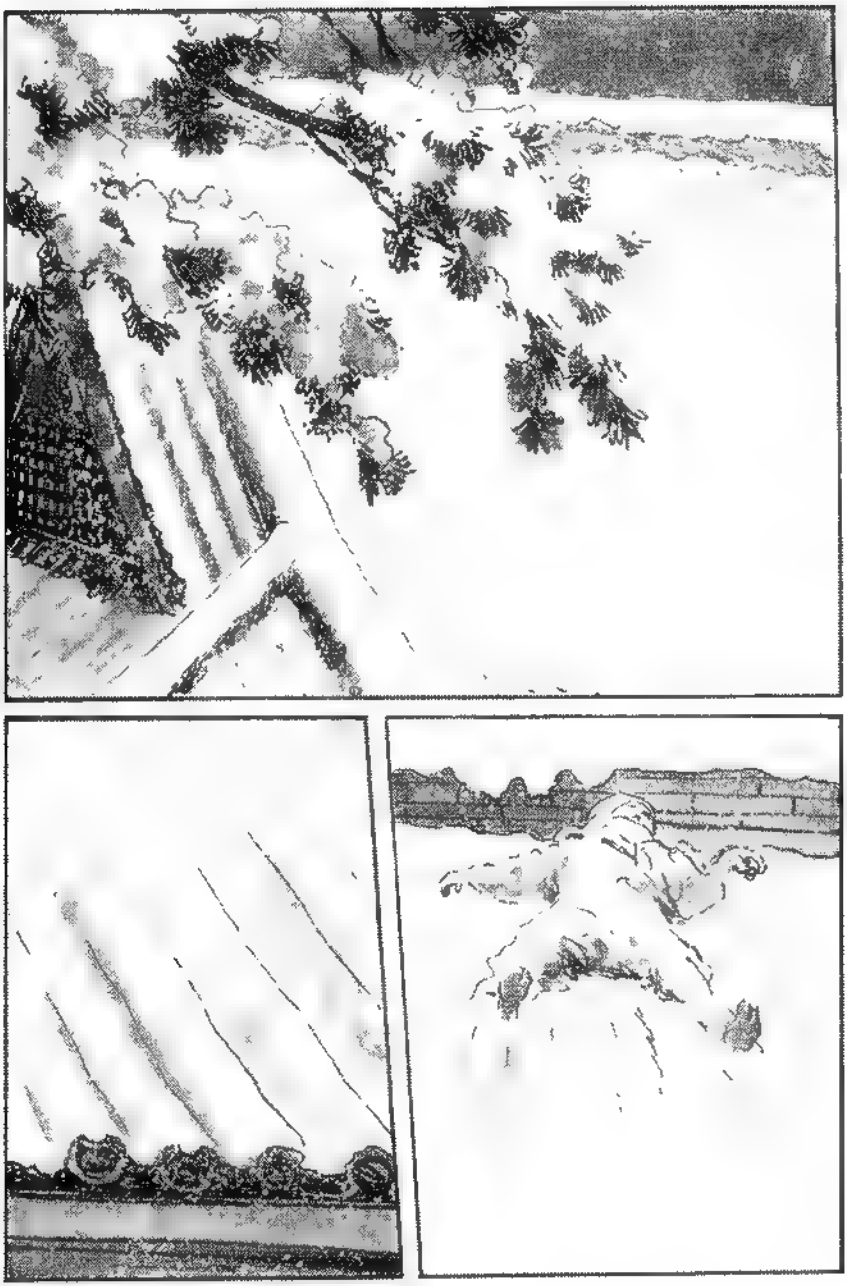
YOUR WATER-BIRD...
..BEATING WINGS.
AND YOUR EIGHT FENCES...
SNOW..

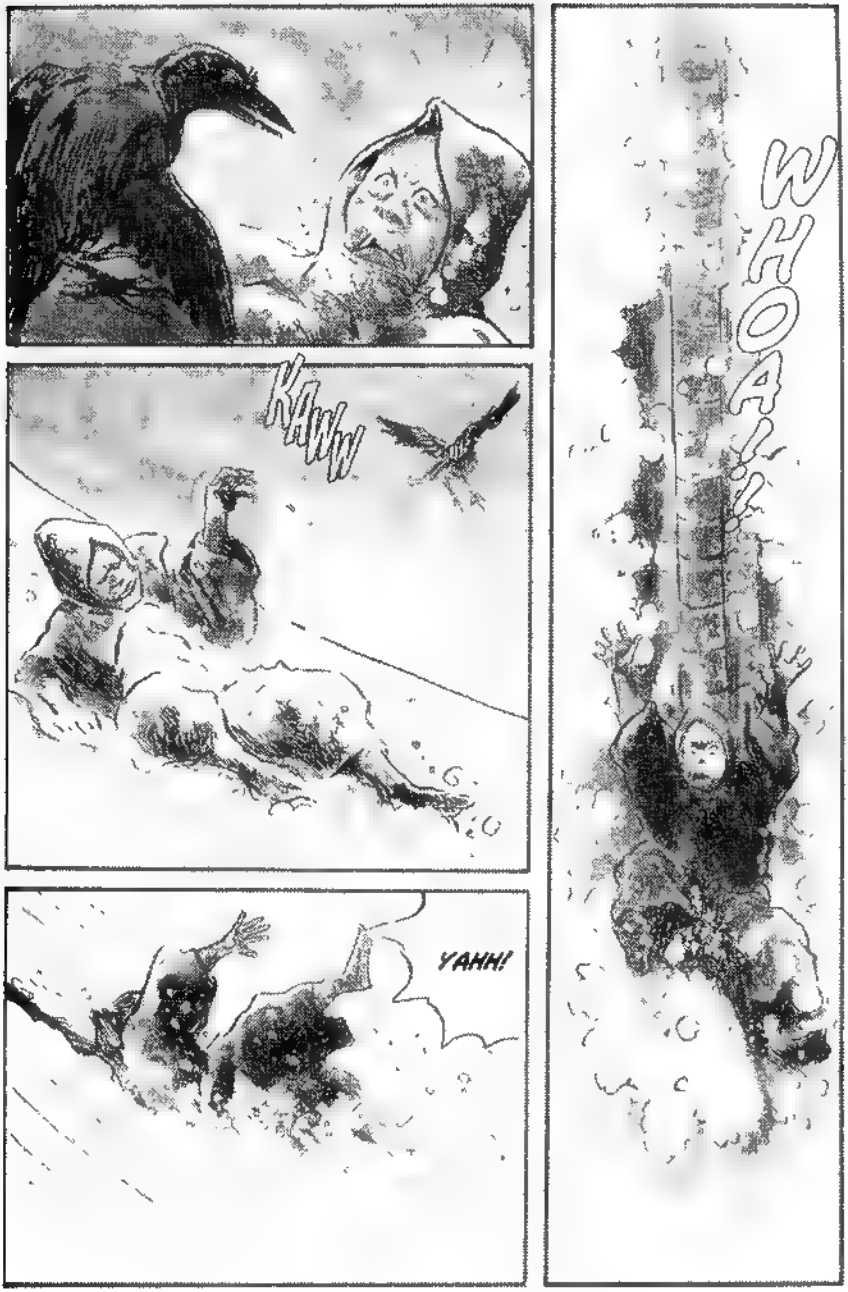
TFT
The Furry Triangles
We Love Beavers.

the hundred and sixteenth

Silent Snow

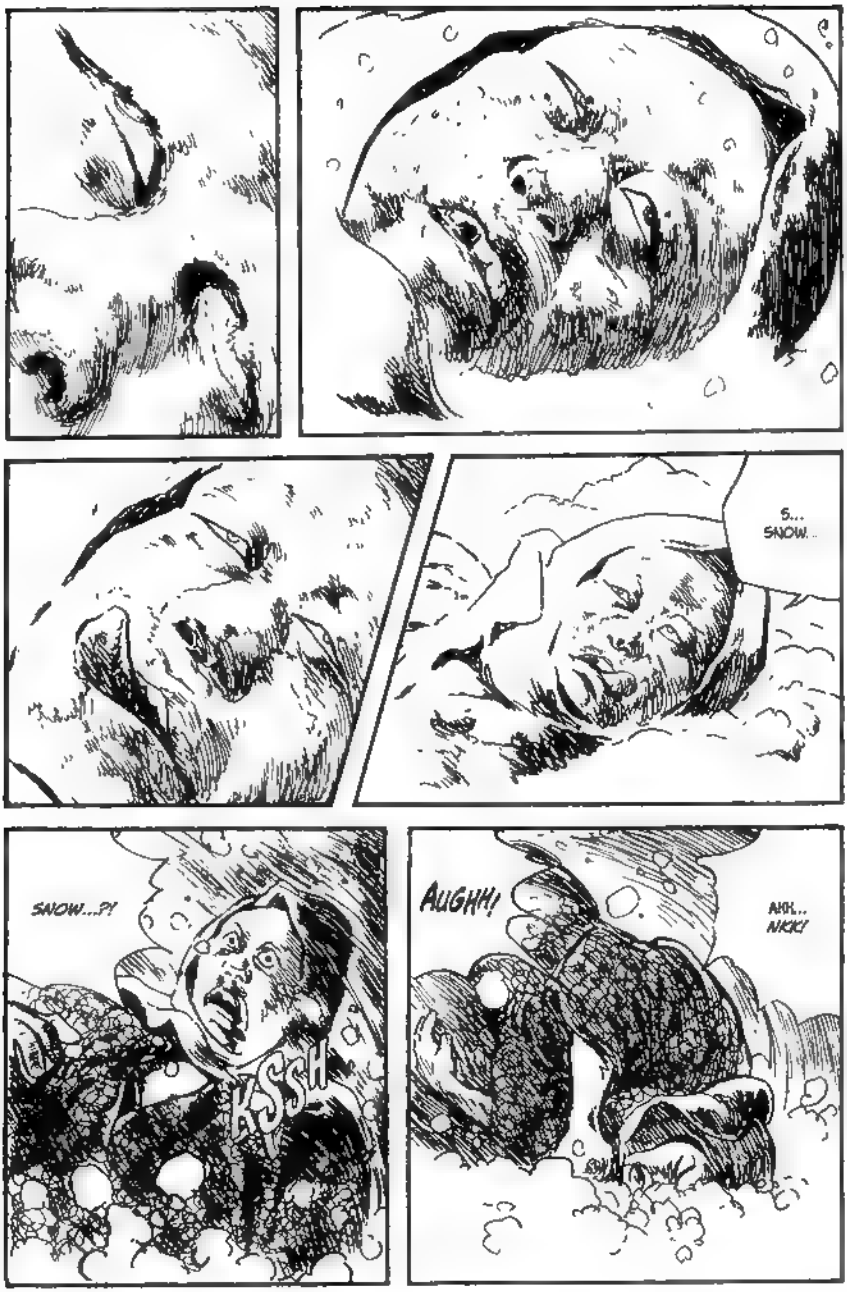


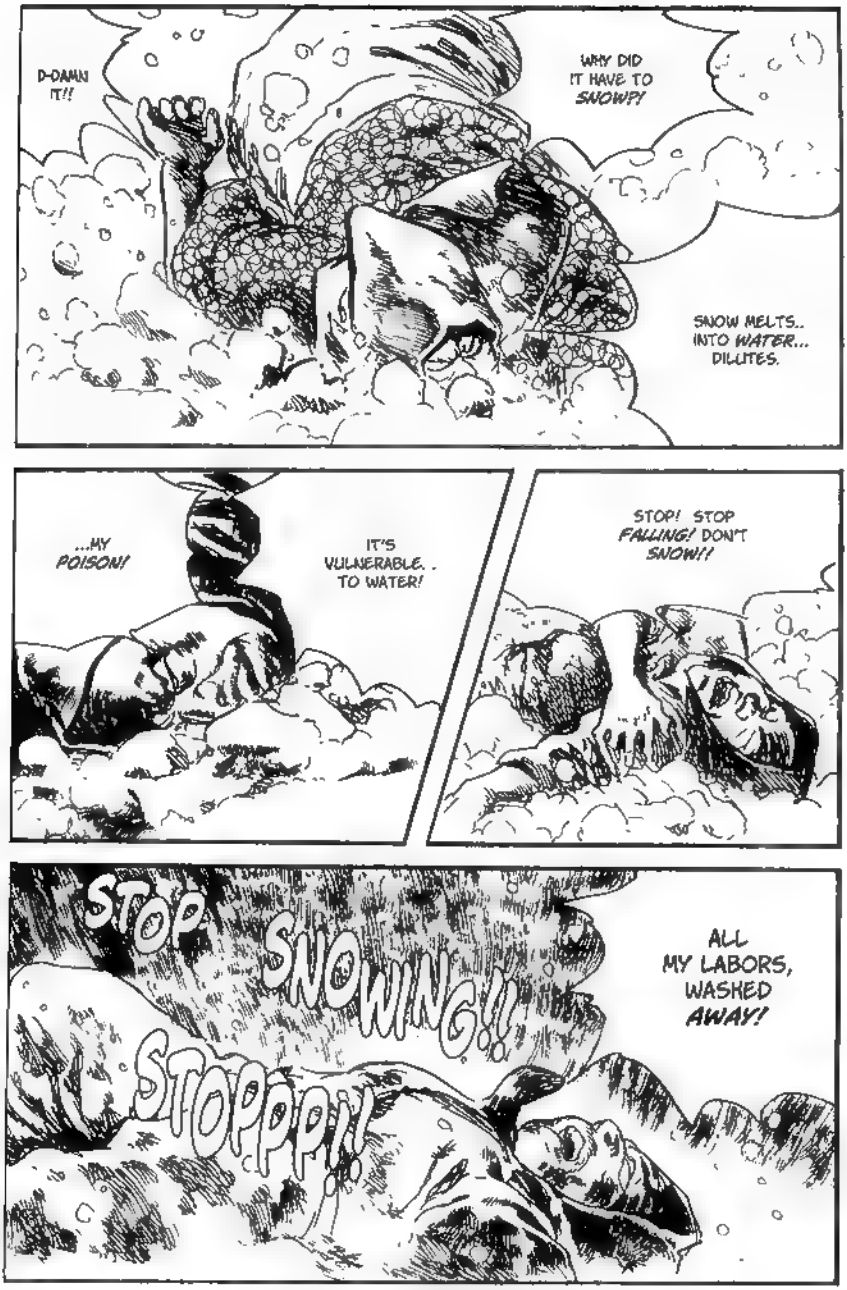


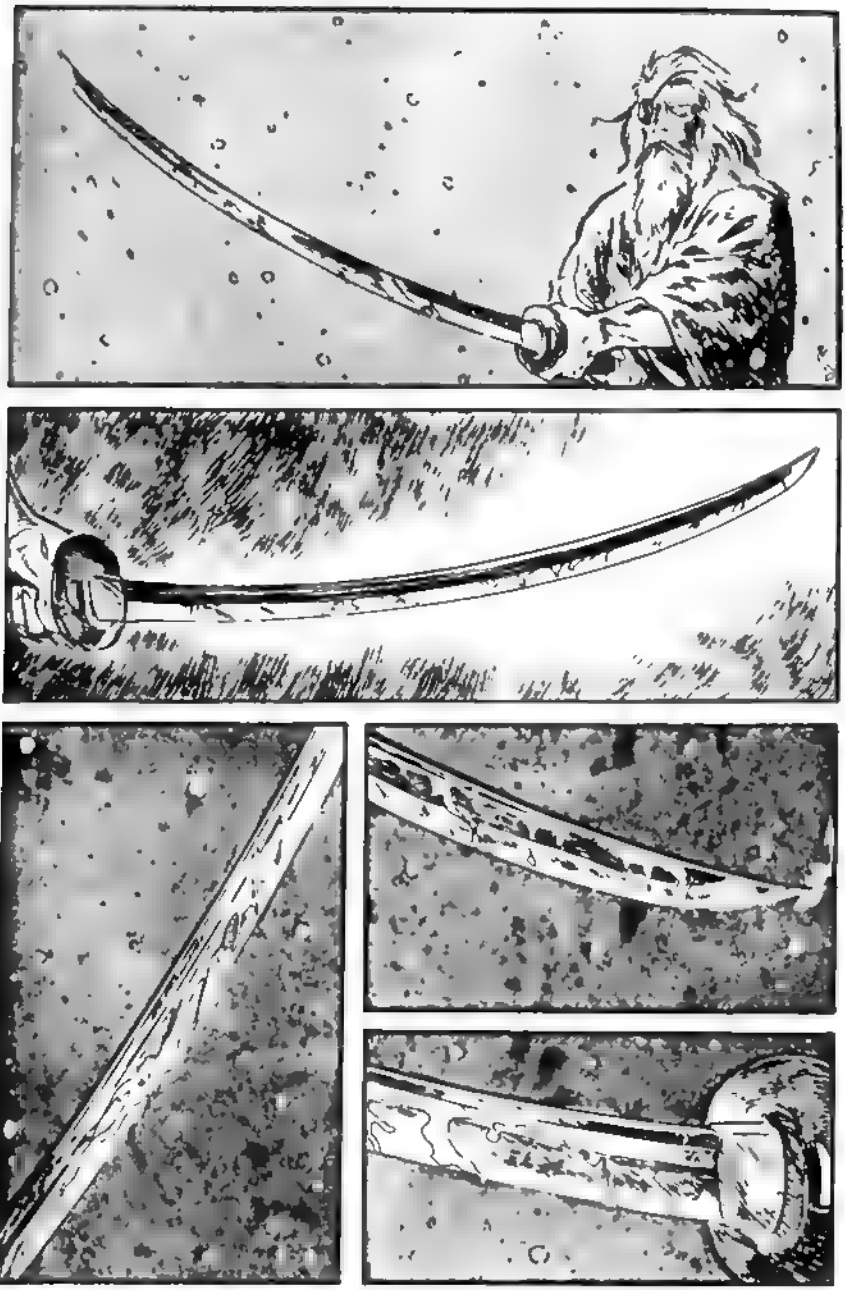

KAWW
YAHH!
WHOA!!

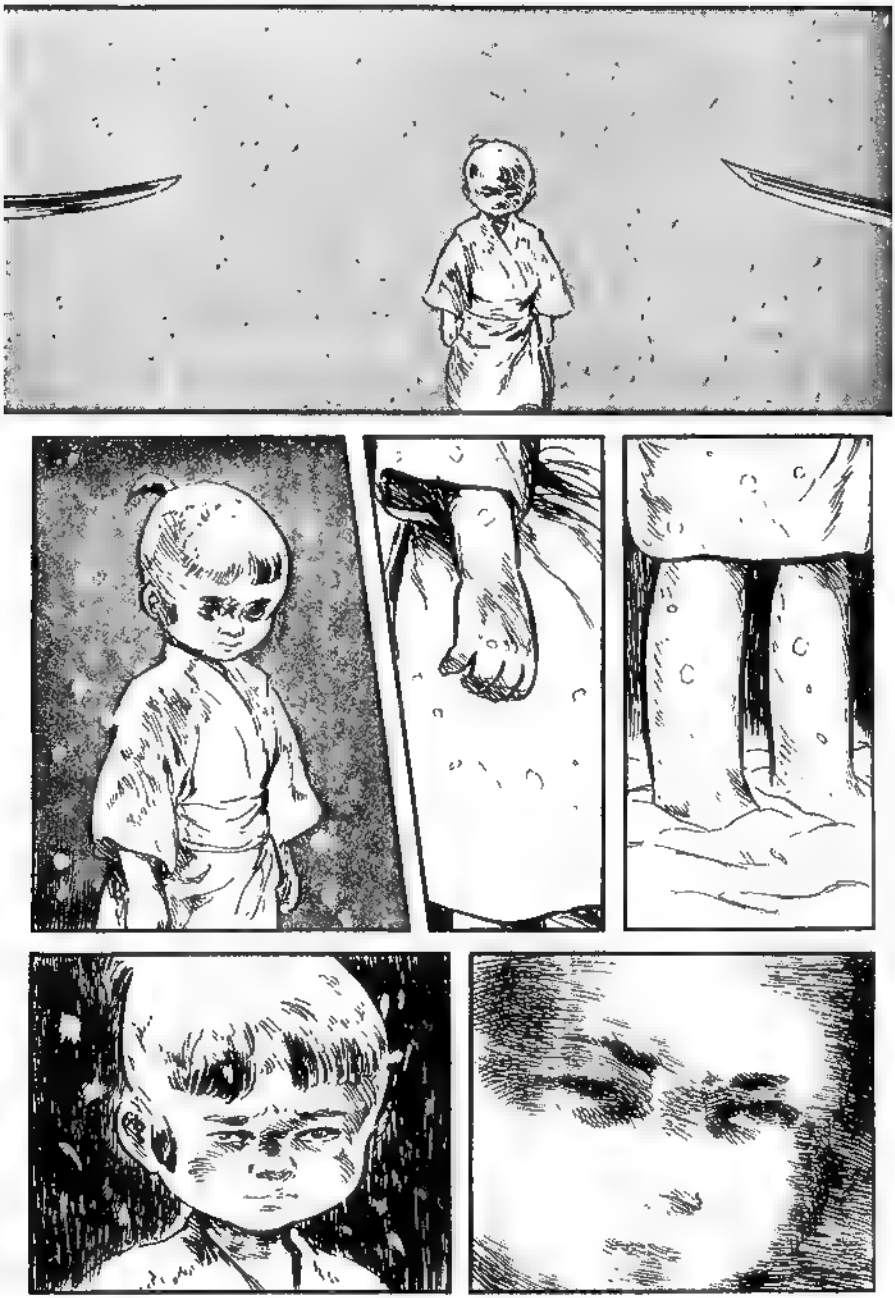
EEYAHH!
FWHD
UNNG..

NNG...
AGH...
HLKK
GHHK!
KHHK!
KOFF
KOFF

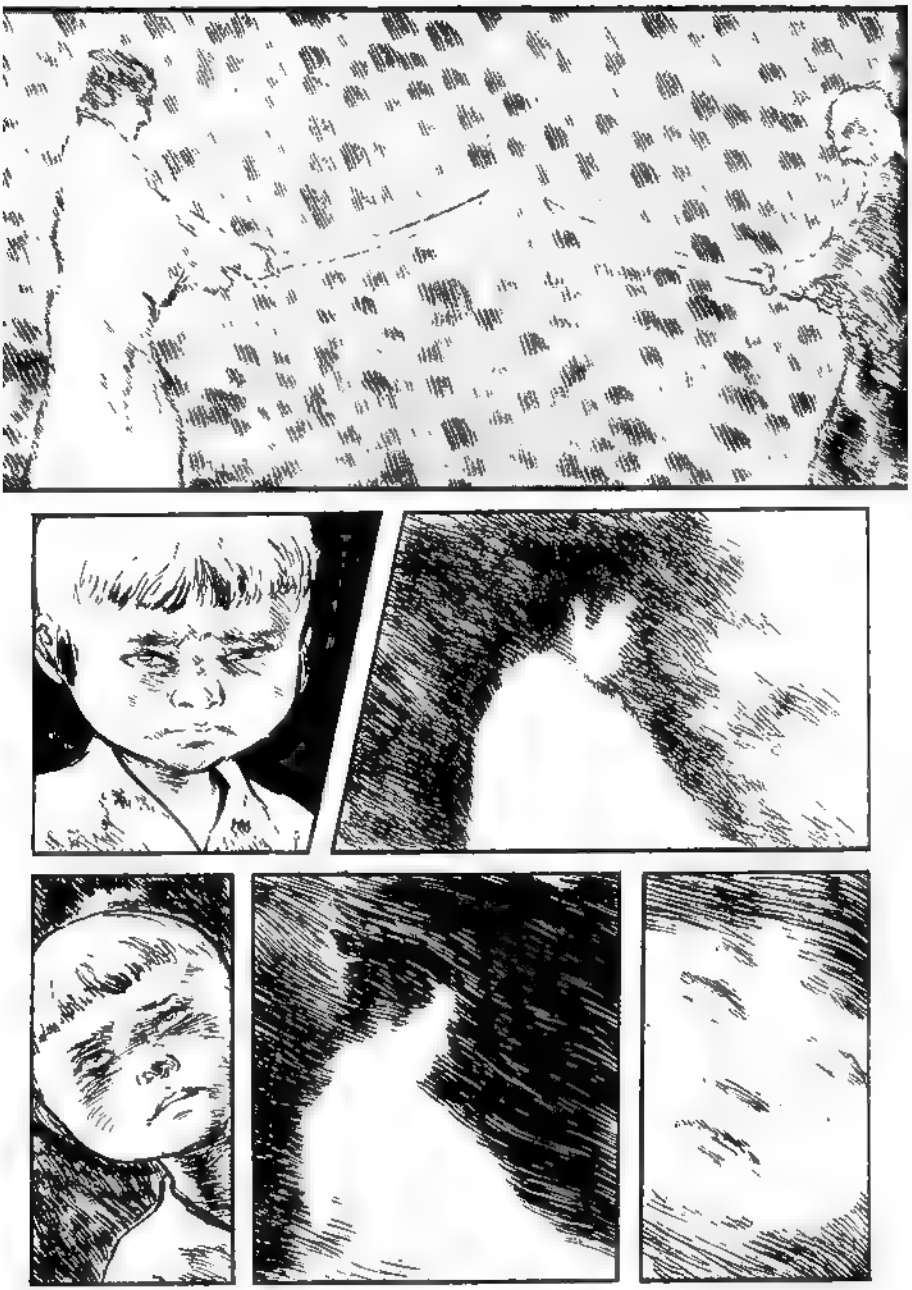

S... SNOW...
SNOW...?!
KSSH
ALIGHH!
AHH... NICK!


D-DAMN IT!!
WHY DID IT HAVE TO SNOW?!
SNOW MELTS.. INTO WATER... DILUTES.
...MY POISON!
IT'S VULNERABLE.. TO WATER!
STOP! STOP FALLING! DON'T SNOW!!
STOP SNOWING!!!
STOPPPP!!!
ALL MY LABORS, WASHED AWAY!





RYAHHH!
HYAHH!



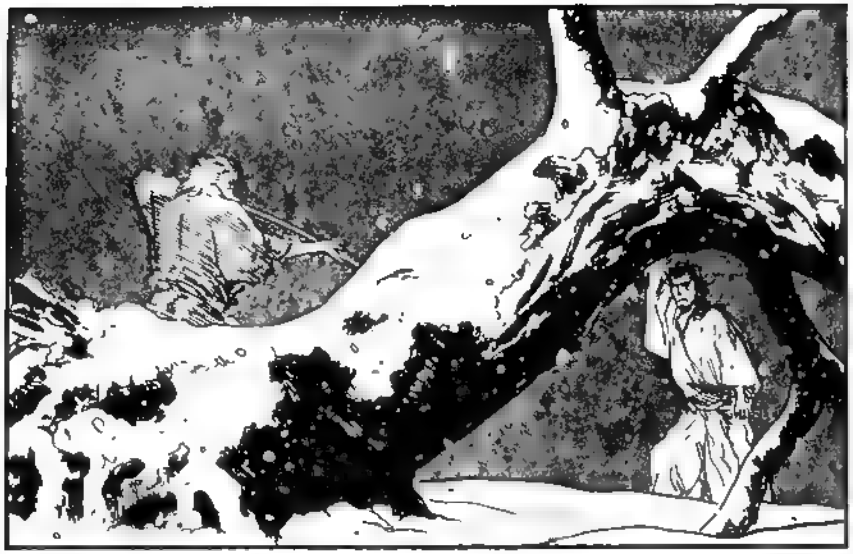
THE WIND HAD STOPPED BUT BY THEN
HE HAD REACHED HIS LIMIT AT LAST

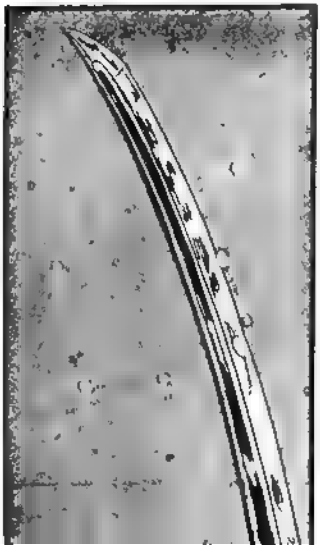
OH, YOUNG LIFE!
CHILD BORN UNDER FATEFUL STARS.
HEAVEN TURNS ITS TEARS TO ICE.
SCATTERS THEM AS THE SNOW
DAIGORO

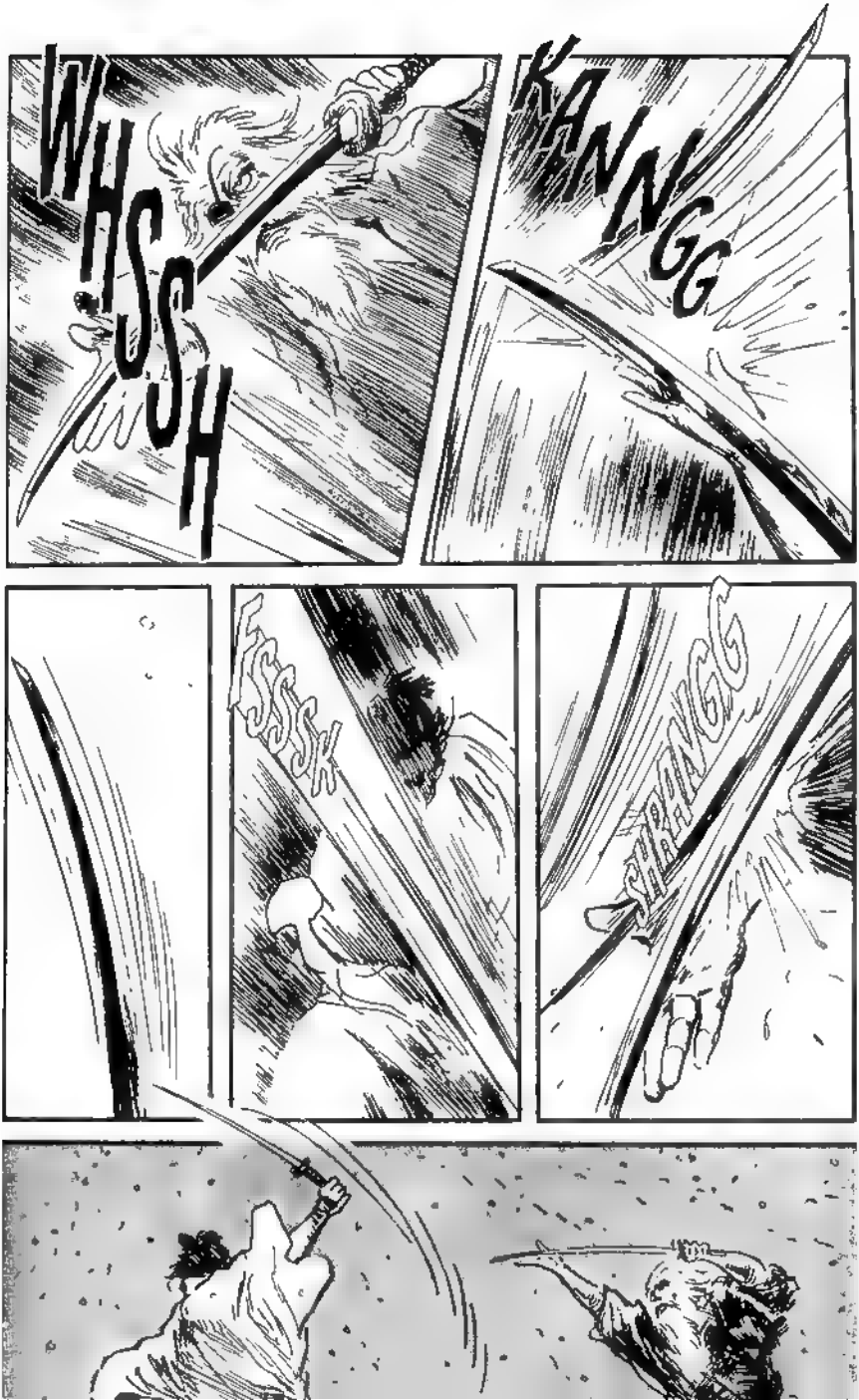
TRAGIC...

KOFFE
KOFFE

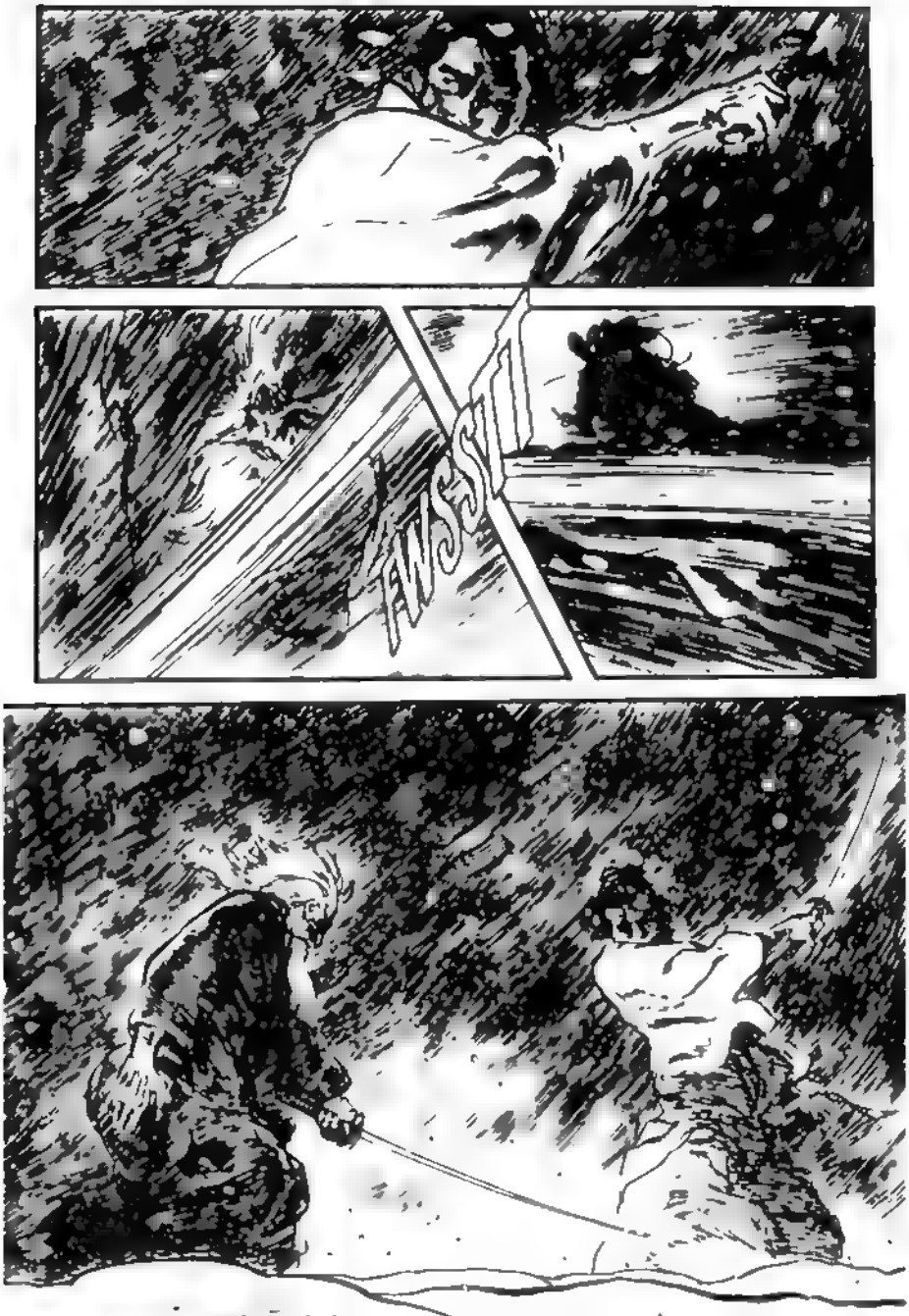
SUB WATERBIRD, SECOND WAVE!

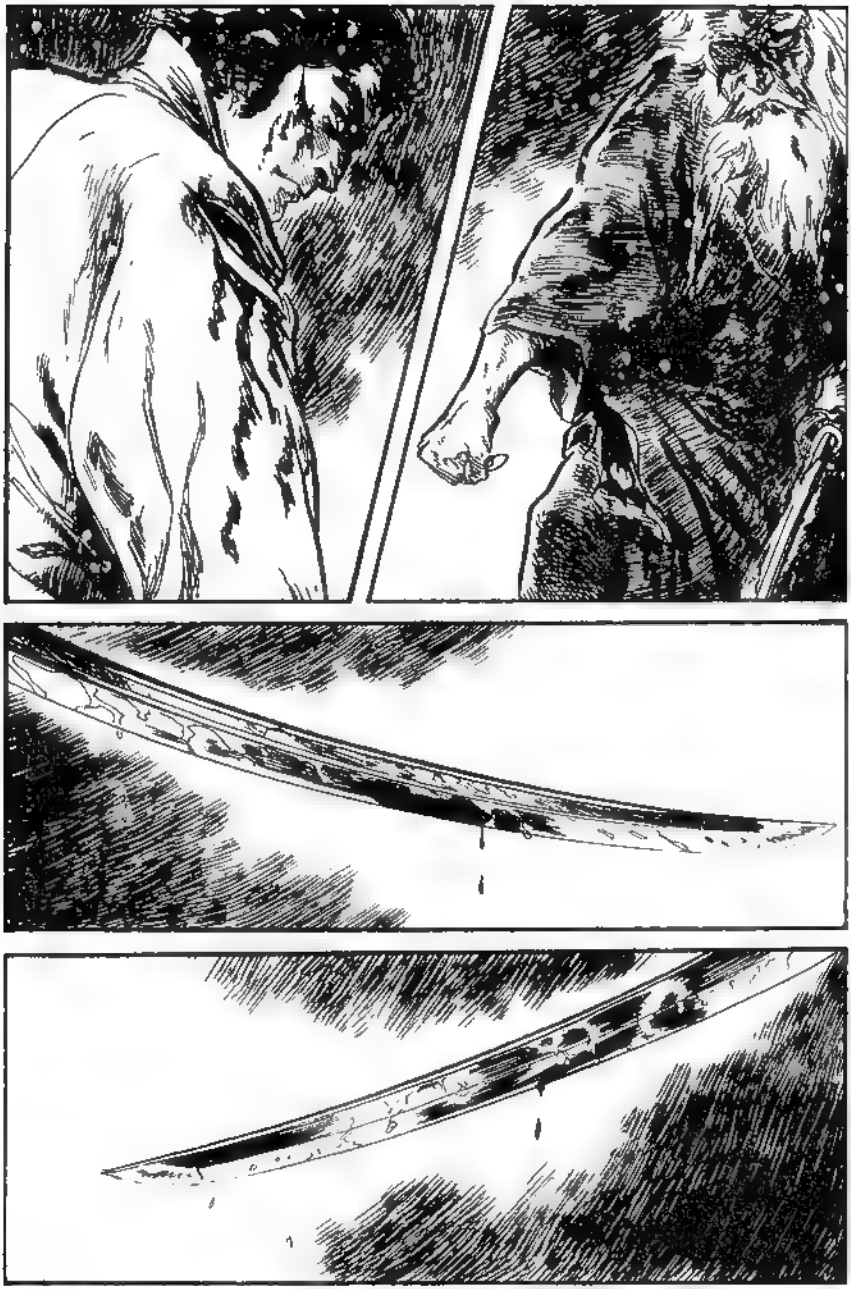


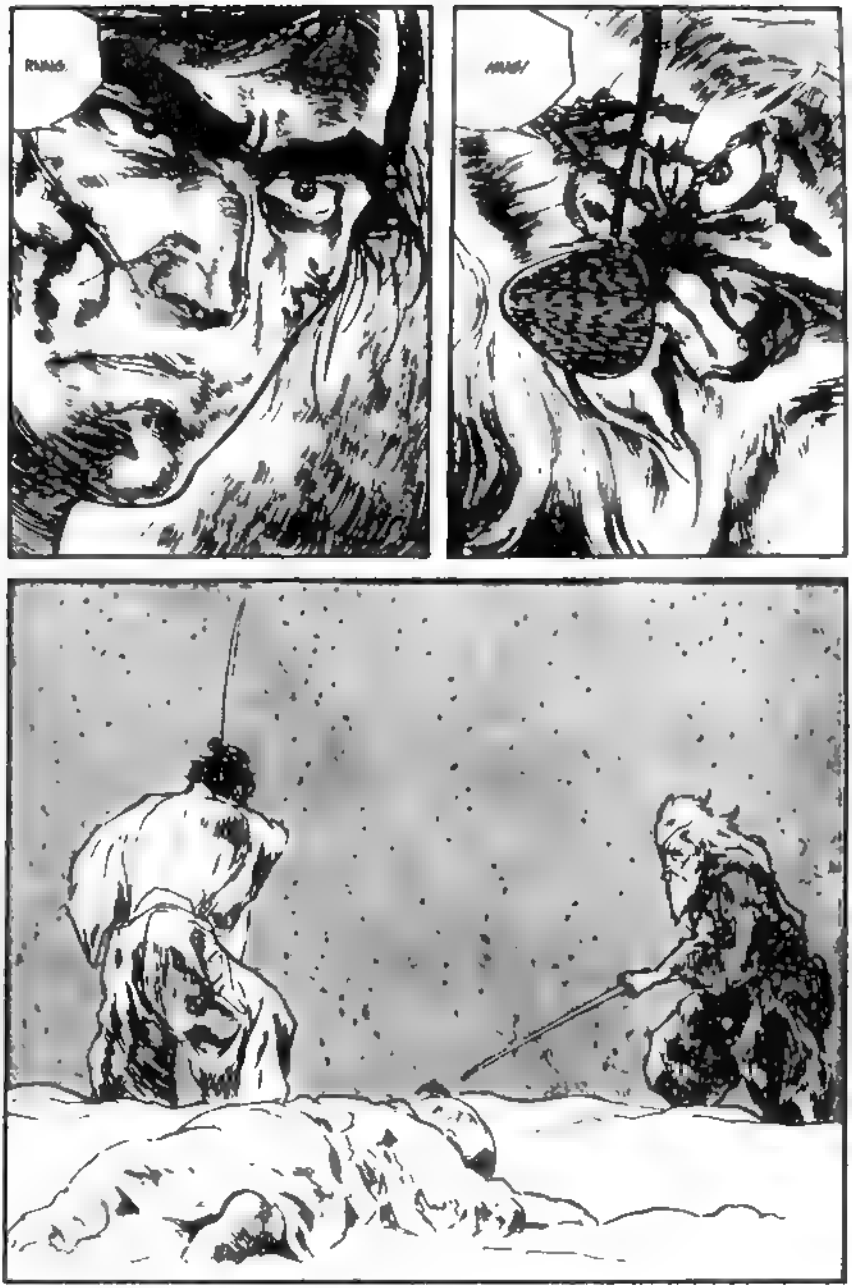


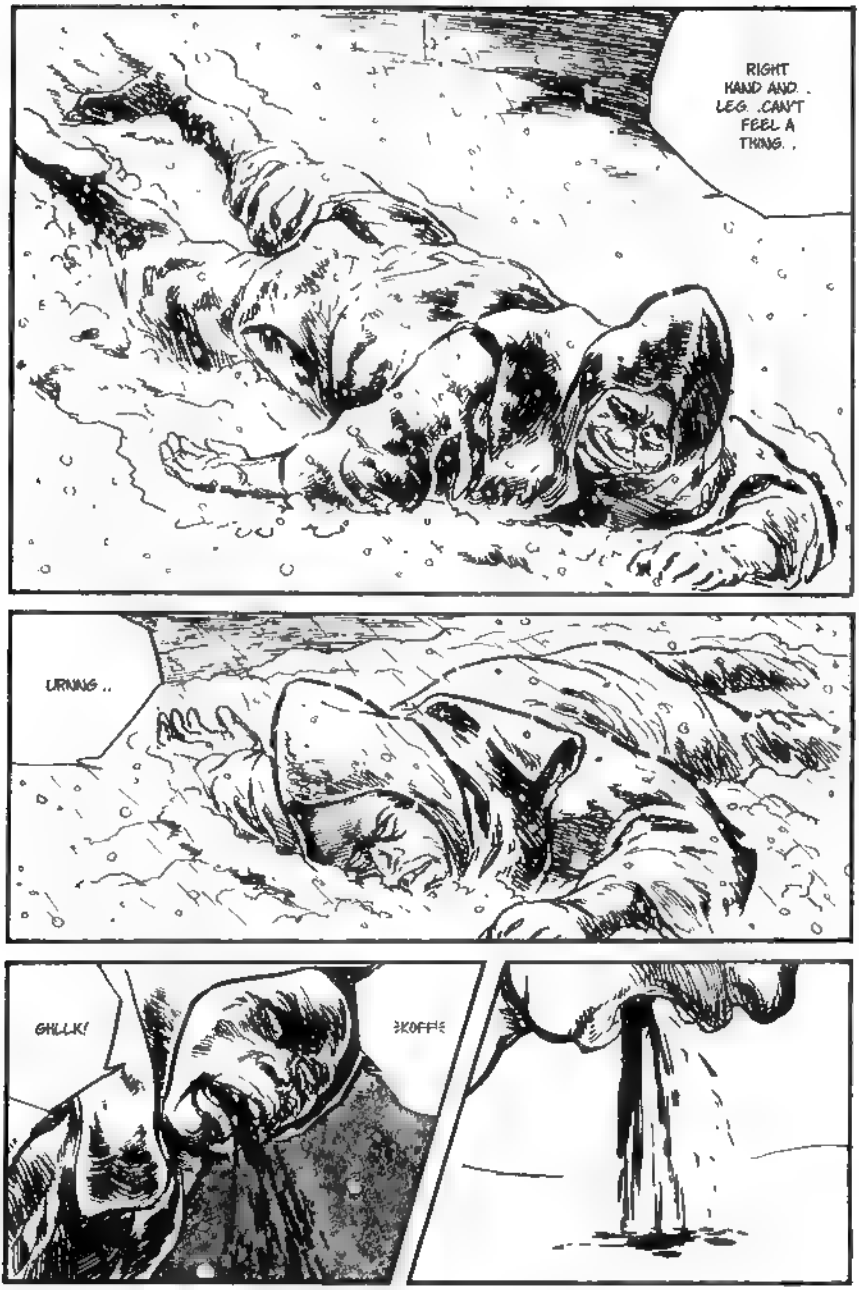

WHSSSH
KANNGG
FSSSK
SHANGG

WHSSH
JHNNG


FWSSH!!

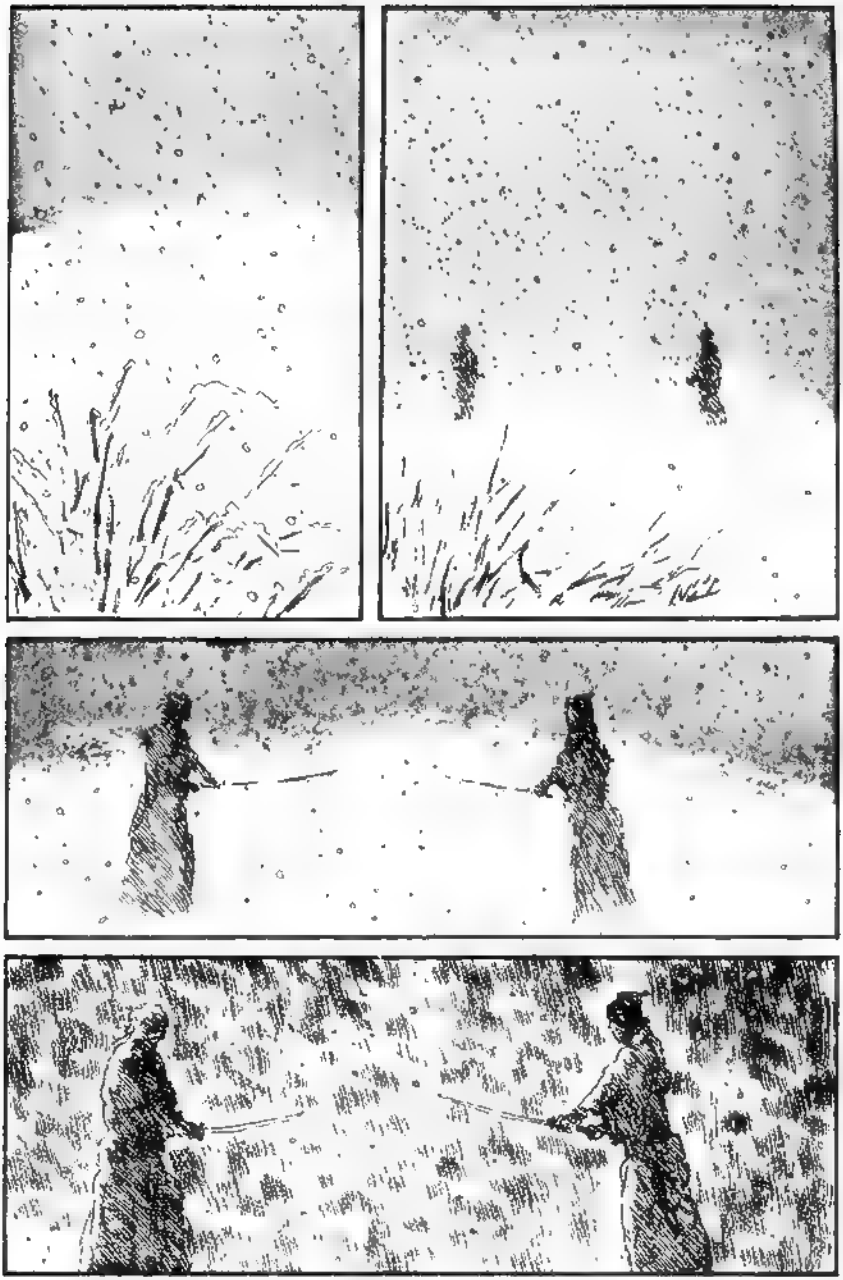


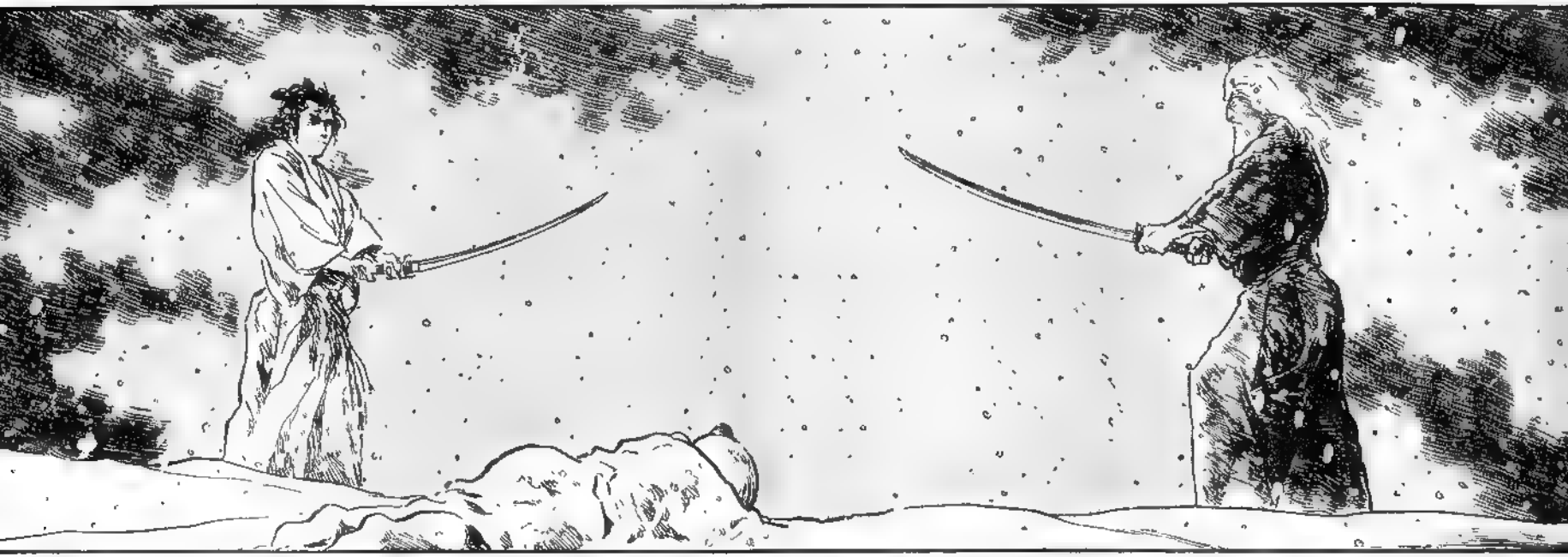

RUNS
AWAY


RIGHT HAND AND LEG. CAN'T FEEL A THING..
URNNG..
GHLLK!
KOFF!

WHAT DID I.. DO...
.TO DESERVE THIS?
WHY .. ME...?!
NAGAI...!

THOSE BASTARDS... WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?
CAN'T GO... WITHOUT KNOWING...
RRGK .!
NNGNL..
AH. NNG.
S... SLEEPY .
SLEEPY .
SO. SLEEPY ..





ALL MY TECHNIQUES...
...EX-PENDED.

AND YET
I WILL NOT LOSE!
HAKK

SHAK
KCHAK
KOFF

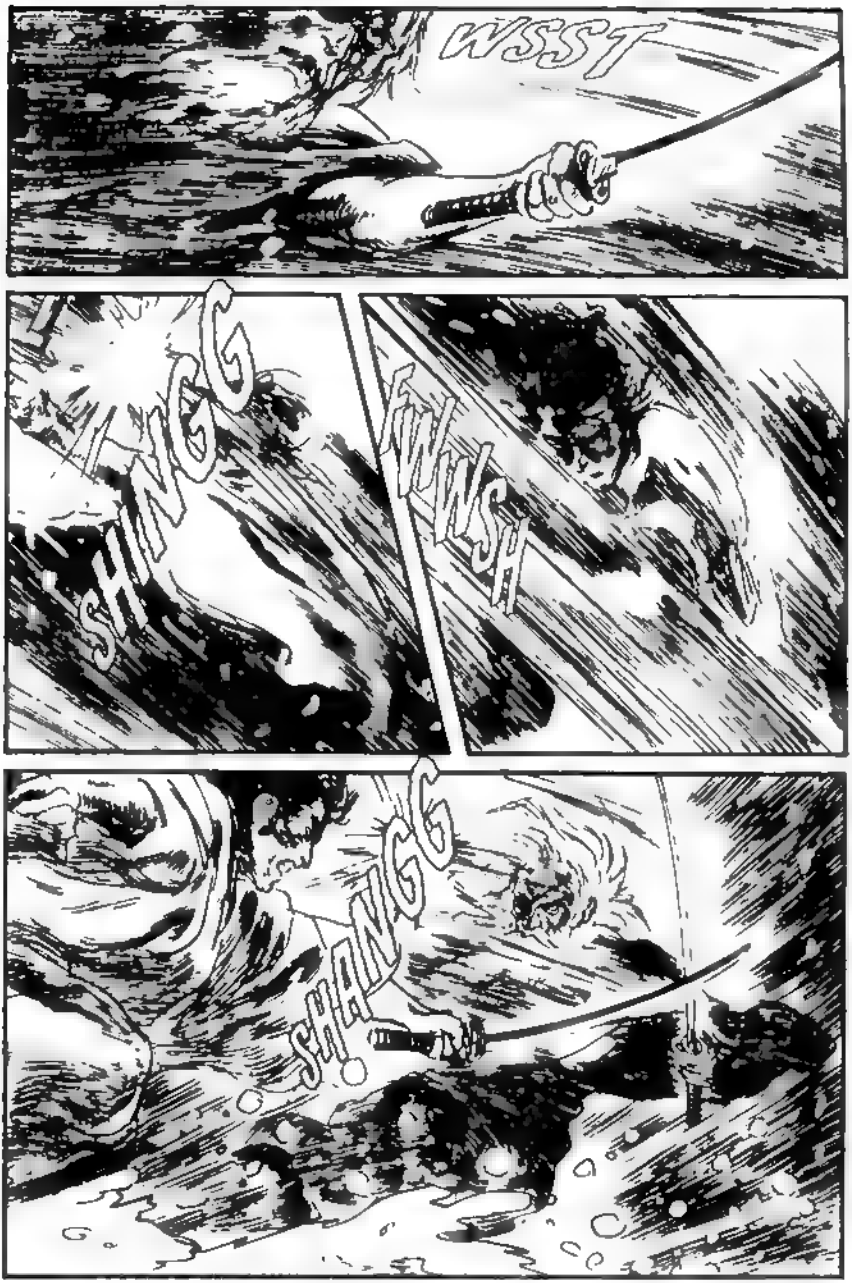
FWSSSH
SHRANNG

HRGK!
KOFF

POISON. .?
PROBABLY .. THE BLADES.
SNOW, POISON ALL THE SAME!
I WILL NOT LOSE!
THEY SAY THAT OLD KIRIN LOSES TO A TOBA.
YOU THINK SO?
I DON'T.

AND YOU WOLF INDEED
YOUR FANGS, SO HARD TO BREAK
HRGLK..!

KUGKK..!


WSSST
SHNGG
FWNSH
SHANGG

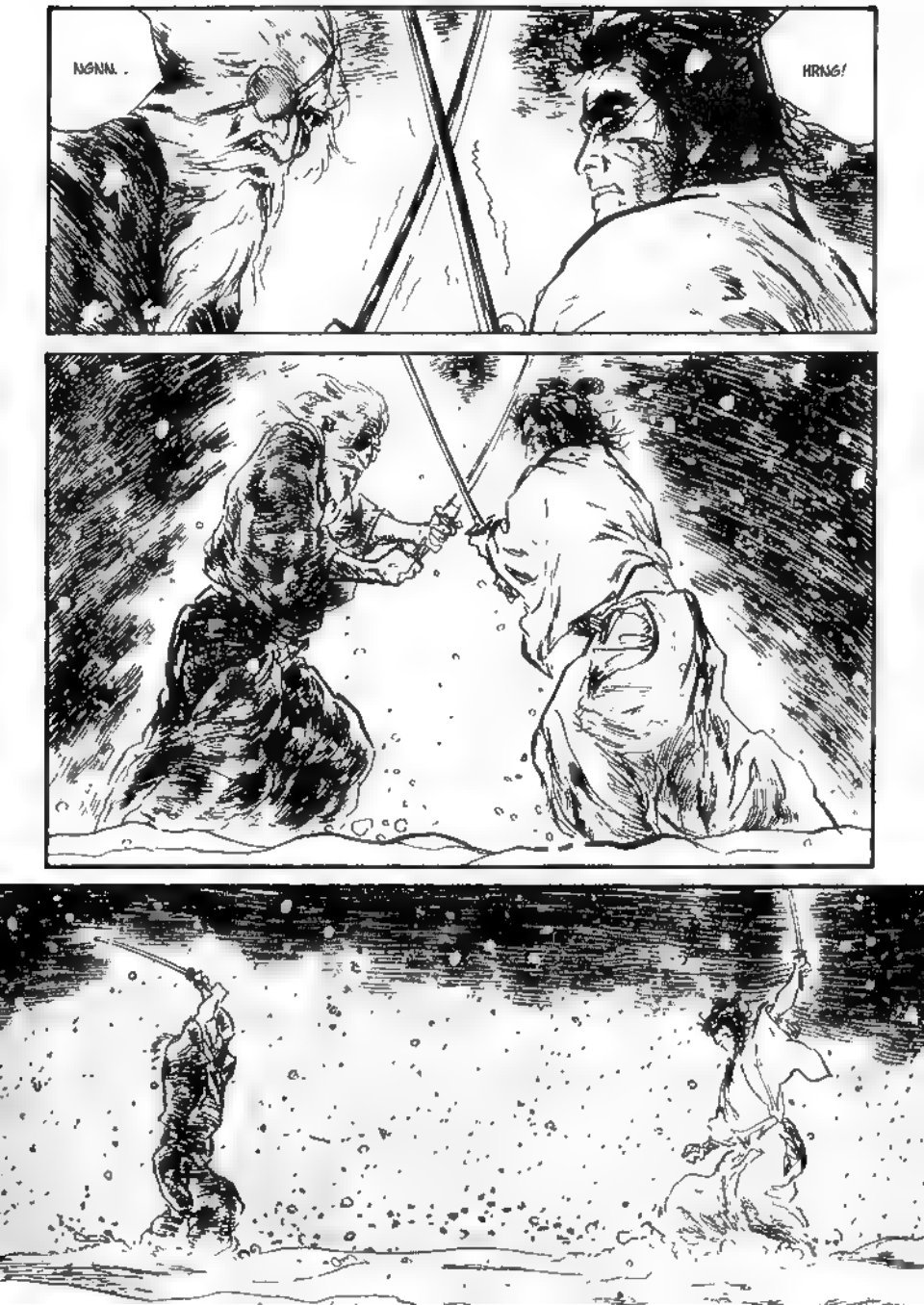
NNG...

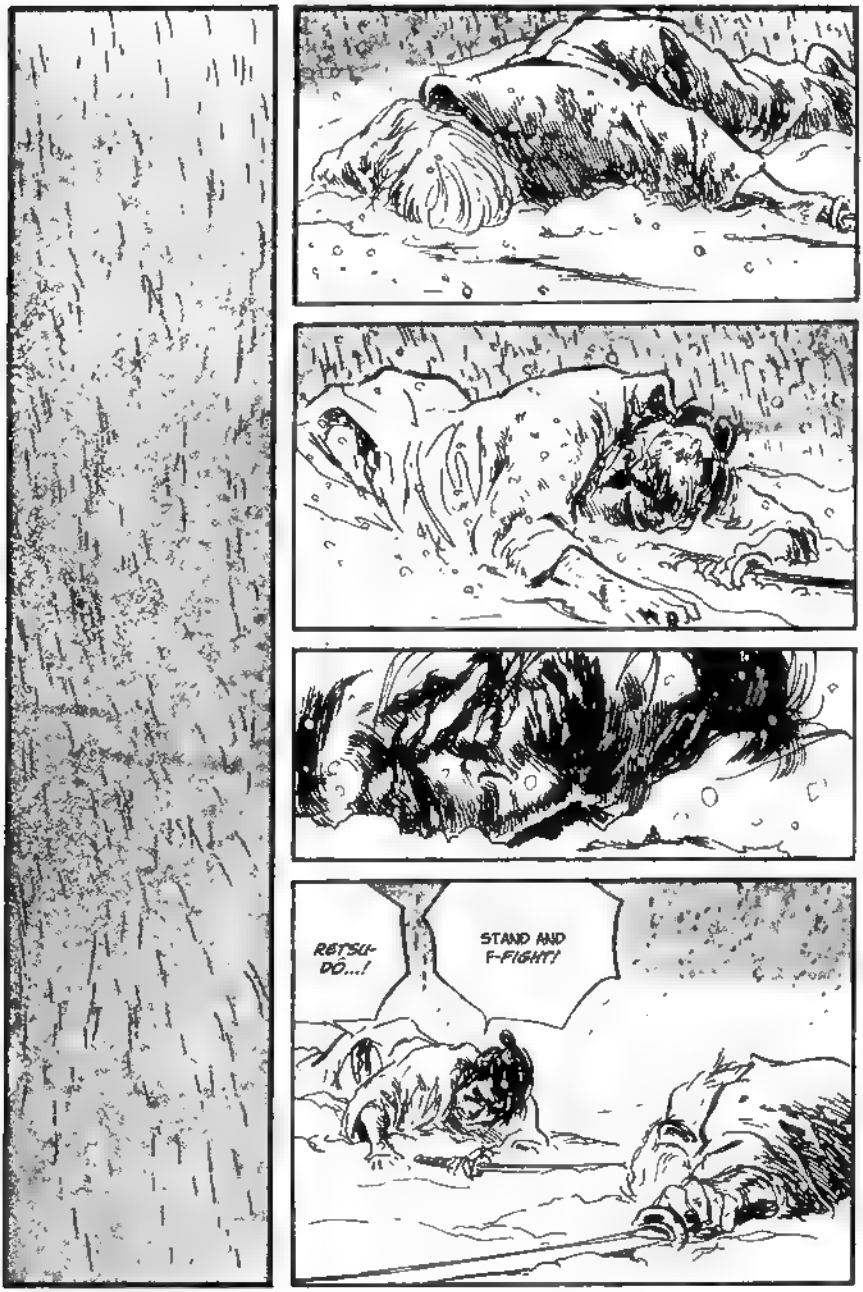
RETSUDŌ!
IF YOU FALL,
I'LL KILL YOU
CLEANLY!

I DON'T LOSE...
...TO SOMETHING LIKE THIS.
WSHEEH
WSHH
WHO
FWO

NNG...
NGHH!

FIGHT!
WHSST
HAH...!
SHSSST
SHANG


NGNN..
HRNG!


RETSU-
DŌ...!
STAND AND
F-FIGHT!

RETSU.
DŌ...

LONE WOLF AND CUB BOOK TWENTY-THREE: THE END
TO BE CONTINUED

GLOSSARY

aiuchi
When both duelers die.

bushi
A samurai. A member of the warrior class.

bushidō
The way of the warrior. Also known as shidō.

Edo
Edo was a castle town, that rose up around the moats and ramparts of Edo castle, the stronghold of the Tokugawa clan. The central core of the city, administered by the *machi-bugyō* city commissioner, who reported directly to the shōgun's senior councilors, and was demarcated on official maps by a black line, the *kurobiki*, and was called the *go-funai*.

enishi
A fateful, chance connection between two people.

funai
The inner wards of Edo, home to the samurai class (see Edo).

honorifics
Japan is a class and status society, and proper forms of address are critical. Common markers of respect are the prefixes *o* and *go*, and a wide range of suffixes. Some of the suffixes you will encounter in *Lone Wolf and Cub*:
chan – for children, young women, and close friends
dono – archaic; used for higher-ranked or highly respected figures
san – the most common, used among equals or near-equals
sama – used for superiors
sensei – used for teachers, masters, respected entertainers, and politicians.

kirin
A mythical horned creature, much like a deer with the tale of an ox and the hooves of a horse. Said to appear before the birth of a saint.

kuchiyaku
Kuchiyaku were the tasters for the shōgun family. They were called *kuchiyaku*, or "official

mouths," because they checked for poison with their own tongues.

ma-ai
The reach of one's sword. The zone in which you can kill your opponent before he kills you.

meifumadō
The Buddhist Hell. The way of demons and damnation.

mu
Nothingness. A crucial concept in Zen Buddhism, and a goal of all the martial arts. Clearing the mind of all extraneous thoughts and connections, to exist wholly in the moment, freed of all attachment to life and the world around you.

namu
From the Sanskrit *namas*: "take refuge in the Buddha." A common prayer for the dead.

ryū
Often translated as "school." The many variations of swordsmanship and other martial arts were passed down from generation to generation to the offspring of the originator of the technique or set of techniques, and to any *deishi* students that sought to learn from the master. The largest schools had their own *dōjō* training centers and scores of students. An effective swordsman had to study the different techniques of the various schools to know how to block them in combat. Many *ryū* also had a set of special, secret techniques that were only taught to school initiates.

shidō
Bushidō. The way of the warrior.

shishogan
The eyes of a swordsman become one with (the emptiness of) *mu*, alive in the moment between life and death.

toba
A mythical creature.

zanbatō
The mythical horse-slicing stroke used by Ōgami Ittō.

TFT

The Furry Triangles